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“Royall, my love, my heart! Royall! Will you not give one look, one word, to your own Moira?”

A FAR-AWAY PRINCESS

BY

L.C.

~~CHRISTIAN REID~~

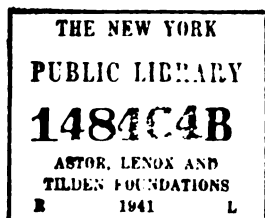
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A FAR-AWAY PRINCESS



CHAPTER I

A MAN of something more than middle age, but sturdy and erect as an oak tree, with a complexion that, in its clearness as well as in its tan, spoke of a life largely spent outdoors, with well-cut features, blue eyes with possibilities of fire in them, and gray hair and moustache of a fine softness, stood at the window of an exclusive club in the city of Baltimore, and watched the passers-by with an air which clearly indicated that he was waiting for some one whose coming was delayed.

It was an hour of the day when there were few members of the club in the house, and those few had quickly recognized that Governor Harcourt was in a less genial mood than usual; that he was, in fact, preoccupied and impatient of any attempt at conversation; so he had been left alone, and was at present the only occupant of the apartment in which he stood. Presently his waiting was rewarded: a young man passed hurriedly by the window, ran up the steps of the clubhouse, and a moment later entered the room in a rather breathless condition, and with an apologetic expression.

"I'm awfully sorry to have kept you waiting, Uncle Gilbert," he exclaimed; "but it has been impossible for me to get away from the office a moment earlier."

"I expected to wait," Governor Harcourt answered. "I knew that it wasn't likely you could be exactly punctual to the time I set, but that you would come as soon as you could. I was sorry to disturb

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you in your busy hours; but I've run up to town simply to see you, and I must return home this afternoon."

"As far as that's concerned, all my hours are busy ones," Paul Lyndon told him; "but none of them too busy to be interrupted if I can do anything for you. What is the matter?"

"Almost the worst thing possible," his uncle replied, as they sat down. "I have had a letter from Royall, telling me that he is married."

"*Married!* Royall! To whom?"

"To a French actress—some woman whom he has met in that Bohemian world of adventurers and vagabonds in which he has elected to live."

"Good Heavens!" Lyndon could say no more for a moment, but sat staring at his uncle, as if trying to realize this startling news. What he thought was finally summed up in the half-involuntary ejaculation: "I wouldn't have believed it—even of Roy!"

"Why not?" Governor Harcourt asked sharply. "Hasn't his choice of life prepared the way for it? When he threw over his duties here, to go abroad and become an artist—who ever before heard of a Harcourt who was an artist!—it was inevitable that he would fall to the level of his associates."

"But artists are not necessarily either adventurers or vagabonds," Lyndon ventured to suggest; "and, therefore, it doesn't logically follow that because he became an artist he should end by marrying an actress."

"I think that it follows quite logically," the other returned. "It's the natural result of the kind of life he has been leading, and I may add that it is a result

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I have feared—I might even say expected. But it has fallen on me as a terrible blow, nevertheless.”

“I am sure of that,” Lyndon said, his eyes as well as his tone full of sympathy. “Roy must have lost his senses before he could have done such a thing.”

“On the contrary, it is a thoroughly characteristic act,” his uncle answered. “I recognize that now. We have allowed Royall’s surface qualities of charm and gaiety to blind us to the essential defects of his character, the selfishness and lack of any sense of responsibility, which have been fostered by indulgence. For that I take blame to myself. Especially I should never have consented to his going to Paris, under the pretence of studying art.”

“Being the kind and reasonable father that you are, I don’t see how you could have refused to let him follow his strongest inclination,” Lyndon remarked.

“*That* for his strongest inclination!” the older man answered, with a contemptuous snap of the fingers. “It amounts to nothing, and I was always sure that it amounted to nothing in the way of a serious talent. It was merely an excuse for Bohemianism and idling; while the associations into which it has led him have lowered all his standards, so that he has ended by wrecking his life with this act of unspeakable folly.”

There was again a short silence as Lyndon cast about in his thoughts for some word of consolation or hope, and finally fell upon that which is the first idea to present itself to the modern mind when there is a question of unsuitable or unhappy marriage:

“If he ever comes to a realization of his folly, and if the woman he has married is what she possibly

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may be in life or character, he can divorce her," he said.

Governor Harcourt frowned. Feelings which have come down from many ages of faith still die hard with the older generation, especially with those who have been trained in proud and conservative traditions.

"Divorce is an abominable and disgraceful thing," he declared,—then added, with a sigh: "But sometimes a desperate situation requires a desperate remedy."

"What does Roy say?" Lyndon asked. "How does he excuse himself?"

"He doesn't excuse himself at all," the father replied. "He writes like an absolute fool. I haven't patience to repeat what he says, but I've brought his letter to show to you."

The letter was produced, and Lyndon opened and read it with keen curiosity and interest. Well as he knew the writer, it astonished him. It seemed incredible that even Royall Harcourt, volatile, self-loving, and self-absorbed as he knew him to be, could make such an announcement as this letter contained to a probably (and justly) incensed father, without a word of apology or regret. Indeed, so far from this, there was a tone of self-congratulation, as of one who has achieved a triumph which has intoxicated him.

"I am the happiest man in the world," Lyndon read; "for the most perfect woman in the world has condescended to marry me. She has condescended in every sense, but particularly because in order to do so she has given up a brilliant career on the stage, where her genius and her beauty would have given

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her fame and wealth far beyond anything that I can offer her. But we have loved each other from the moment of our first meeting; and, since she is entirely alone in the world, it seemed that the sooner we were married the better. I have not, therefore, waited to announce my engagement to you; knowing that, since you have always desired my happiness above all things, you will be glad to learn that I have secured it in this manner. And you will not, I am sure, be prejudiced by the knowledge that the enchanting woman I have married has been for a short time an actress. Her name is Moira Deschanel; she is of blended French and Irish blood, and I am confident that when you see her you will acknowledge that I might have searched the world over without finding such another combination of all that is delightful and fascinating in woman."

"It would certainly be necessary to go far to find such another effusion as this!" Lyndon dryly commented here. "One would think that Roy was positively out of his mind."

"I told you that it was the letter of an absolute fool," his uncle responded. "He was undoubtedly out of his mind when he wrote it; for it's clear that the woman has completely bewitched him, and against such an infatuation there is nothing to be done."

"Yes, that's quite clear," Lyndon assented: "there's nothing to be done until the infatuation subsides. But Roy's infatuations hitherto have been of very transitory nature, you know."

"With one exception," the older man said. "He has always had such a strong fancy for Elinor Fane, and returned to it so often from other fancies that

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I've entertained the hope that some day I might have the happiness of seeing him married to that charming girl. It would have been a marriage so suitable in every respect, and one which would have settled him down where he should be, among his own people. But now that hope is over!"

It was so evident that such a hope was over that Lyndon did not feel it necessary to assent to the statement. He glanced again at the letter, and read its concluding sentences. Then he looked up at his uncle.

"Roy apparently means to wait for an invitation from you before returning to America," he said. "He writes here of having taken a house outside of Paris, and of intending to continue his work in the atelier, and also——"

"Wants to know how far I will increase his allowance to meet his increased expenses," Governor Harcourt broke in. "Well, the answer to that is short: I shall not increase it at all. He did not even pay me the compliment of consulting me with regard to his marriage, and I shall not recognize it in any way. The allowance which I have up to this time given him I will not withdraw; for I don't feel that such a step would be just, since I am largely accountable for the fact that he has no capability of supporting himself. But I will not increase it, and I shall make him clearly understand that he must never bring the foreign actress whom he has married under my roof."

Lyndon looked startled at this.

"But that means that you banish Roy himself from your home," he said, "since he is not likely to enter a house the door of which is closed to his wife."

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"I'm aware that it means just that—the banishment of my only son," the other answered. "But there's nothing else I can do. I have no intention of playing the part of a melodramatic father, and declaring that I have no son; but I feel that Royall has acted in a manner which I can pardon only in a very limited degree. I will continue, as I've said, the allowance I have given him, and I will provide for him in the new will I intend to make; but I shall not leave the Manor to him, and I will not recognize the woman he has married."

"My dear uncle," Lyndon remonstrated, "this won't do! Roy has acted very badly toward you; but, after all, you must remember that a man has a right to choose his own wife."

"Those are modern ideas, I know," his uncle returned; "but they are not mine. A son, especially in Royall's position, as the sole inheritor of an old and honored name, has no right to think only of his own fancies or his own desires, when it comes to the serious matter of marriage. He should consider the claims of those who went before, and of those who are to come after him. Roy has chosen to disregard these claims; and, having made such a marriage as he has, I on my part refuse to let him bring this French actress to the Manor, to fill his mother's place."

"Wouldn't it be well, before making up your mind, to learn something more about her?"

"Why should I need to learn anything more?" was the stern rejoinder. "The facts he has given are enough. She is an actress—a *French* actress—whom he has met in the Bohemian world of Paris, and

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whom it is impossible to imagine other than without morals or any decent standard of life. She is no doubt an adventuress, who has entrapped him into marrying her because he is known to be a rich man's son. But I am determined that she shall be disappointed, at least in the wealth she expected to gain. I have written a letter in which I have explicitly told him all these things, and I have brought it with me for you to read."

Another letter was then produced and handed to Lyndon, who read it with a very grave countenance. The gravity had deepened to serious concern when he presently looked up at his uncle.

"I wish that I could induce you to reconsider before sending this letter," he said. "It is so severe——"

"I intended it to be severe."

"And seems to leave so little hope of reconciliation——"

"There is no such hope as long as that woman is his wife."

"That I really don't know what desperate thing it may drive Roy to do," Lyndon ended urgently.

Governor Harcourt lifted his brows.

"What more desperate thing can he do than he has already done?" he inquired. "I knew that you would remonstrate against what I have written, but I cannot consent to change or soften anything. Royall must understand that indulgence is at an end; that at last he has done the unpardonable thing, and must bear the consequences. And I have showed you this letter because I wish you also to understand my position exactly. I have always regarded you as a son,

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and more than ever now I wish to God that you were my son."

"As far as affection goes, I am," Lyndon said, in a voice full of feeling; "but Roy is your son by nature as well as by affection, and nothing can change that; so you mustn't do him an injustice by putting me before him in any degree or any manner. I could never consent to that, Uncle Gilbert."

His uncle gave him a quick look.

"You are a good fellow, Paul," he said, "and always loyal to your cousin; but I shall not ask your consent for what I choose to do as the head of the family. You understand my position as far as this marriage is concerned, and that is all I had in view in coming up to see you. For the rest, this letter goes."

"I'm sorry to hear it, sir. I believe that if you waited a little you would write it differently."

"You are mistaken: I shouldn't write it differently if I waited a year," the other replied. "But I have no intention of waiting a day: Royall can't learn too soon what I think of his conduct." He deliberately sealed the envelope of the letter, and then rose to his feet. "Come," he said. "After I've mailed this, we'll lunch together before I go to my train."

An hour later Lyndon had bidden his uncle good-by and returned to his office (he was the junior member of an eminent legal firm), where important work awaited him, for which he felt singularly unfitted. It was a new experience with him not to be able to command the attention of his mind; but for once he failed almost entirely to do so, owing to the pre-

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occupation of his thoughts with the news he had just heard, and the unhappiness which would be its inevitable result to those toward whom he felt a deep affection.

For, as he well knew, his mother would be as much distressed as Royall Harcourt's father by the reckless marriage which, for the present at least, had alienated that young man from his friends and home. And in this distress, notwithstanding a natural sense of exasperation, Lyndon himself shared; for the cousins had been brought up together as brothers, both Lyndon's father and Governor Harcourt's wife having died early, and Mrs. Lyndon having made her home with her brother for many years, managing his household and filling a mother's place toward his son. Thus neither of the two boys had ever felt any lack of a father's care or a mother's love. It was, indeed, well known in the family that Royall Harcourt was Mrs. Lyndon's favorite; and that Governor Harcourt held Paul Lyndon in higher esteem, if not in deeper affection, than his own son. Lyndon's steadfastness of character and tenacity of purpose appealed strongly to the older man's kindred nature; while Royall Harcourt, who was understood to take his characteristics from his mother's family, although charming, lovable, and possessing many facile gifts and powers, was volatile and pleasure-loving to a degree which often roused his father's sternest reprobation. Between characters so different as those of the cousins there might readily have developed antagonism and dislike, when brought into such close contact. But it spoke well for the two that, both as boys and young men, they were, despite these dif-

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ferences, sincerely attached to each other; though the attachment was on Lyndon's side tinged with somewhat contemptuous indulgence for the other's lightness of nature, and on Harcourt's side by an undisguised scorn of his cousin's austere ideals.

Those ideals were austere indeed, as the clear-cut face, the keen gray eyes, and the firm mouth indicated. Even the most casual observer, looking at Paul Lyndon, could not doubt that here was a man formed to "scorn delights and live laborious days,"—one whose eager ambition would be guided by a clear and disciplined brain as well as by a resolute will, and who would never be swerved from any path on which his feet were set by the impulses that are such potent factors in the lives of many men. Young as he was, these qualities had already told, as they must always tell in a man's career. Through his inexhaustible energy and avidity for work, he had forged so rapidly ahead that he was recognized, both by those who liked and those who did not like him, as a force to be reckoned with in his profession and outside of it. A character so strongly marked is, however, seldom very popular, and of Paul Lyndon it could not be said that he was popular in any degree. A large number of people respected and admired him; a small number liked him cordially; and a much smaller number—in fact, only two or three persons in the world—loved him.

Among these last his uncle, as he knew well, stood chief; therefore, his uncle's trouble was not only heavy on his heart, but even able to distract his mind. And the more he reflected upon this trouble, the more his anger rose against the selfishness as well as the

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arrant folly of his cousin's conduct. It was to him an incredible thing that a man could allow a passion for a woman to dominate and control his life, and lead him to forget the duty he owed to his father and his family by making a marriage which to Lyndon, as to Governor Harcourt, appeared an almost criminal act of madness. For, although the younger man had endeavored to encourage the elder with hopes that his son had not become the prey of an adventuress in that Bohemian world of Paris which represents the antithesis of everything moral and respectable in the mind of the average Anglo-Saxon, there was no doubt that he himself took the darkest view of the possibilities involved, as far as the character of the woman was concerned. His stern, final verdict was:

"They are equally inexcusable—the entrapped and the entrapper,—and no punishment would be too bad for either or both."

CHAPTER II

WHILE the family of Royall Harcourt were reeling under the shock which the news of his marriage brought to them, that young man was spending his honeymoon in a gay little villa on the banks of the Seine, with the bride whom he had so unadvisedly taken unto himself.

It was certainly an ideal spot for the *lune de miel*,—a tiny house smothered in roses, and a garden also full of roses, at the foot of which the silvery river glided, between the overhanging verdure of the shore and a feathery green island opposite, on its way down to Normandy and the sea. The villa, although small, was so charming, and had so delightful an air of seclusion, that it had fascinated the two young people, who, having impulsively fallen in love, had quite as impulsively married in haste, whether or not to repent at leisure was now to be proved. For a few weeks they had almost forgotten that any world existed outside of the magic circle they had drawn around themselves in this rose-embowered nest beside the Seine; but matters are so arranged in human life that such forgetfulness is not possible for long, and there came a day when the world they had ignored broke in upon them in very decided fashion.

It was a fortnight later than that other day on which Governor Harcourt had met Paul Lyndon with the news of his son's marriage, when Royall Harcourt found himself called to Paris by two letters which reached him at the same time. One of

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these letters was from a well-known banking house, notifying him that his account was overdrawn; and the other was from a man who was at once a distinguished journalist and an accomplished author of books,—the two things are often united in France,—who wrote: "I am leaving for Morocco in a day or two, and wish to see you before I go. Come immediately if you possibly can, for the matter to be discussed is important."

It was the last letter which decided Harcourt to go into Paris for a few hours. But he also intended to look in at the bank, and mention that he was in daily expectation of a remittance from America, with which to make good his overdraft. In gay spirits, therefore, he took his departure one morning, promising to return by early afternoon.

It was late, rather than early, afternoon, however, when the figure of a young woman—tall, slender, and singularly graceful—emerged from the villa alone, and strolled slowly across the lawn to some chairs placed beside a rustic table under an acacia tree. Sinking into one of these chairs, she sat for a time quite motionless, gazing across the gliding river to the lovely greenness of the isle lying upon its shining current.

And, seen thus, there was something in her attitude as well as in the setting of the scene—the flowers and feathery foliage, and glimpse of the villa in the background—which to the eye of an observer from the river (had there been such an observer) might have suggested a stage arranged and ready for drama. Not that there was any air of artificiality about the charming figure in the foreground: on the

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contrary, nothing could have been more absolutely natural and simple than the attitude and expression of the girl—for she was no more—who lay back in her chair, looking so quietly out over the beautiful river; yet there was, nevertheless, set upon her, in some subtle fashion, that stamp of *unusualness*—a note of something arresting, and differing from the commonplace,—which marks the dramatic artist, whether developed or undeveloped, and is neither more nor less than the outward sign of a capacity to feel and express emotion in unusual degree.

The rank of the artist is, in fact, determined by the degree in which that faculty is possessed; and any one of keen observation must have perceived that there was every indication of its existence here in high degree. The large, lustrous eyes, of such deep blue that under their dark lashes they looked almost black, were so striking in form and expression that they would have attracted attention even in a plain face; but this was a face of the most artistic and most fascinating type of beauty. Above the luminous eyes and delicate dark brows, a low, broad forehead was framed in masses of dusky hair; the pale, slightly hollowed cheeks were of the most lovely outline; the straight, chiselled nose had the thin nostrils which speak of extreme sensitiveness; and the mobile lips seemed made to express every varying shade of emotion; while the lines with which the head was set upon the rounded column of the throat would have ravished a sculptor.

Indeed, the two strains of blood which had united in Moira Deschanel are those which, out of all Europe, are most likely in their mingling to produce a

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great artist. The Celtic gift of imagination, that visionary quality which must exist in every artist worthy of the name, and the French clarity, *verve*, and keen sense of what is required for perfection in art, when united in just proportion, make an incomparable whole; and this proportion had been achieved in the girl who had abandoned the artistic career opening before her to become Royall Harcourt's wife. That she had made a great sacrifice she did not realize, any more than that among the impossibilities of life is that of doing violence in any final sense to the strongest bent of the individual nature. She had been swept off her feet by the ardent wooing of the young American; and had yielded the delight of satisfying her artistic impulses to the deeper delight of making happiness for one whose passionate devotion had demanded and gained its reward.

And now on this golden afternoon of summer, near the end of the *lune de miel*, there was no shadow of regret, but only a great happiness and content in the eyes that watched the river flashing by in the sunlight and the feathery green of the islet opposite, against the sapphire sky. She seemed to be dreaming, but she was in reality listening and waiting for the coming of the presence which had so deeply entered into her life, and which was necessary to fill and complete the charm of the place and the hour. And presently, with a sudden quickening of attention, she knew that this presence was at hand. Her ear caught the sound of the arrival of an automobile, although the road by which it approached was completely hidden by shrubbery; and a moment

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or two later a young man emerged from the villa and came quickly across the garden toward her.

"*A la bonne heure!*" she cried joyously, as she lifted her face to his kiss. "I've been expecting you for an hour. Surely you are later than you expected to be."

"Yes, I'm later," he replied, as he sat down in one of the deep chairs and flung his hat on the table.

Seen thus, he presented a very attractive personality,—a figure tall, lithe, well built, and immaculately clothed in white flannels; and a dark, handsome head, full of distinction, with well modeled features and healthily sunburned skin. His eyes were also dark,—hazel in tint, and full of glancing lights; and dark likewise the slender moustache, which he wore with curling, upturned ends in the French fashion, and under which his white teeth gleamed with telling effect whenever he smiled. Too virile of aspect to have any appearance of the *petit-maitre*, there was about him, nevertheless, something uncommonly picturesque, *débonair*, and almost romantic, which had a suggestion, for all his modernity, of a gay young gallant of a more adventurous age.

As he said nothing more for a few minutes, but, closing his eyes, leaned his head, with an air of weariness, against the back of the chair into which he had thrown himself, the girl beside him, after a keen glance at his face, also kept silence, while a white-capped maid came out of the house with a tea-tray. After she had placed this on the table and withdrawn again into the villa, Moira poured out a cup of tea, put in a slice of lemon and a dash of rum, and, leaning forward, laid her hand gently on the slender,

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nervous, sunburned hand lying on the arm of the chair nearest her. The hazel eyes, opening instantly, smiled at her adoringly, while the hand closed at once on her white fingers.

"Darling!" Royall Harcourt murmured; and then added, apologetically: "I didn't know I was so tired, but I've had an awfully trying day."

"I can see that you have," she answered sympathetically. "Take some tea. It will make you feel better."

He took the cup she offered; and while he drank it she swept his face again with the same look that had been in her eyes a little while before,—the look with which all but the dullest women soon learn how to read what their men are thinking or feeling, without annoying them with questions. Moira read enough now to make her say presently in the low, rich tones of a voice that was a true *voix d'or* in its lovely inflections, whatever language it spoke:

"*Dis donc, mon ami!* Something has happened to you in Paris,—something which is not agreeable. Will you not tell me what it is?"

He sighed audibly.

"I suppose that I must," he answered; "but I wish it were not necessary. I wish that I might shield you from all things disagreeable or painful."

"But that is neither possible nor desirable," she said gently. "I should be a playmate, not a help-mate, if I shared only the agreeable and delightful things of life with you. We've taken each other for better or worse, and who shirks the worse is a coward. Tell me what has happened!"

"Well," he said, a little reluctantly, "what has

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happened is that I found a letter at the bank from my father, from which it appears that he is very angry about our marriage—you see, he knows nothing about you, and—and I suppose I should have told him of my engagement——”

“Of course, you should!” she exclaimed quickly. “And I should have insisted on your doing so before I consented to marry you. We have both been to blame,—greatly to blame! We forgot every one but ourselves, and it is no wonder that your father is angry.”

“But that is not the worst,” Harcourt went on. “His anger takes the practical form of declining to increase the income he has allowed me; and I am in debt, with a bank account heavily overdrawn.”

Maira’s dark brows drew together over her eyes. This was a form of trouble with which she was, as it chanced, only too well acquainted.

“My poor dear love!” she said. “How sad that I should have brought anything so dreadful as money difficulties upon you!”

“*You!*” Harcourt exclaimed. “You have not brought the difficulties upon me: I have brought them upon myself; for I should have remembered my father’s character, and acted differently toward him.”

“There’s not the least doubt of that,” she agreed. “But can we not make amends now? Surely it is possible to explain—to induce him to forgive you!”

But Harcourt’s face hardened at this suggestion as she had never seen it harden before. For a moment, indeed, it seemed a different face altogether

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from the countenance she knew so well: the eyes narrowed, the jaw set; resentment, and a strain of unsuspected obstinacy, showed in every feature.

"No," he replied sharply. "I would starve before I would make any further appeal to him. What is done is done. He has chosen to cast me off——"

"O Royall, it cannot be as bad as that!" she gasped.

"Practically speaking, it is just as bad as that," Royall answered. "He informs me that he will continue the allowance I have heretofore received, but that he will not increase it, and—that I am banished from home."

It was absolute consternation which showed in Moira's face now.

"And all because you have married me!" she cried. "Oh, how can I ever forgive myself for ruining your life in such a manner!"

"Ruining my life!" Harcourt repeated. "How dare you say such a thing? You have blessed my life beyond my utmost power of expression; and if I never see my father's face again, and if he chooses to leave the Manor to my cousin, as he intimates that he may do, it will be a small price to pay for your love and your companionship."

"It is far too high a price for me to allow you to pay," she said. "Something must be done,—late as it is, something must be done to induce him to pardon you."

"I tell you there is nothing to be done," Harcourt answered angrily. "It is *I* who will never pardon what he has written. I knew that he was provincial, prejudiced, ignorant of life except as he has known

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it; but I never thought he would go so far as to think or to write——”

He paused abruptly, conscious that his anger was betraying him into more than he had meant to say. But the pause was as significant and as betraying as the words had been. Moira looked at him, and then held out her hand.

“Will you let me read that letter?” she asked quietly.

“No,” he replied, almost harshly. “It is not a letter for you to read.”

“But I have a right to know exactly what has been said of me—what he thinks about me,” she urged. “Royall, you can’t withhold the knowledge from me.”

“My darling,” he answered, “I must withhold it! I could not endure for you to read what my father has ventured to write of you.”

“But he has not written it of *me*, but of some one who exists only in his imagination,” she urged; “and I must learn what is in his imagination before I can tell what to do to make myself known to him as I really am.”

“You shall do nothing,” Harcourt told her violently. “I will never consent to your making any effort to change his narrow-minded prejudice; and, therefore, it does not matter either to you or to me what he thinks.”

She shook her head at this; and even as she had seen a new Royall within the last few minutes, so he now saw a new Moira,—one whose will was as determined as, and (he vaguely felt) stronger than, his own.

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"You are not thinking, when you say such a thing as that," she answered. "Whatever he has said or done, he is your father; and, as it is you who have failed in duty toward him, so it is for you (and I am one with you now) to do all that you can to atone for your past neglect, and, if possible, reconcile him to what is unalterable."

"That is impossible," Royall said. "You've no idea of the extent and violence of his prejudices. He'll never forgive me—I'm perfectly sure of it,—and I shall never ask him to do so; nor shall I allow you to make any advances toward him,—*that* least of all."

She regarded him meditatively for a moment, and then held out her hand again.

"Give me the letter," she said. "I must see it."

Under the quietness of her manner he felt the inexorableness of her demand, and, after a moment's further hesitation, produced the letter.

"Since you will not be satisfied otherwise, here it is," he said. "But if you love me, Moira, you will not insist upon reading it."

"It is because I love you that I must insist," she replied gently.

Then, drawing the enclosure from its envelope, she opened it and began to read. Harcourt watched her face, with an anxious expression on his own; and he was not surprised when after a minute he saw a sudden rush of blood into her cheeks, though the dark-lashed lids did not lift from her eyes. He extended his hand quickly, and tried to take the letter from her.

"You see!" he cried. "It is not fit for you to

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read. Why would you not trust my judgment, and spare yourself the knowledge of such insults?"

But she held the letter fast, while, lifting her lids, she looked at him; and, although her eyes were full of the brightness of intense emotion, there was no gleam of angry feeling in them.

"Have you forgotten what I told you a few minutes ago?" she asked. "These things are not said of *me*, but of some one whom your father has created out of his imagination. Therefore, they do not hurt me—at least not much,—so be quiet, dear, and let me finish."

Miserably enough he yielded again, withdrew his hand, and fell back in his chair. But this time he did not watch her face; on the contrary, when she presently let the letter fall into her lap, and again looked at him, she saw that he had closed his eyes under the hand which supported his head. She watched him in silence for a moment, with an expression of mingled tenderness and pain; and then once more laid her soft touch upon the hand nearest her.

"Dearest," she said gently, "don't be so down-hearted! Everything will come right—I'm sure it will—when your father learns that you have not really married the creature he imagines me to be."

Harcourt dropped his hand and stared at her with something like wonder.

"Moirá," he said, "you are the most amazing as well as the most adorable creature in the world! I don't believe there is another woman existing who could read that letter without anger and indignation!"

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"I am certain that there must be many," Moira replied; "for to consider it as I do only argues a little reasonableness of mind. And, besides, I feel keenly how much you have been to blame; and I also,—oh, I don't minimize my share of the blame at all! And so we must work together to undo the consequences of what we have done."

"Never!" Harcourt declared, with the force of unbreakable resolution in his voice. "I shall never take a step toward reconciliation. I accept that letter as final, and I will never acknowledge my father again, until he begs your pardon for the shameful things he has written of you without knowledge or proof. That I swear!"

"Royall, Royall, be more reasonable! Remember what provocation he has had."

But there was nothing reasonable in Royall's frame of mind. He shook his head obstinately.

"You are an angel, Moira, to take it in this way," he said. "But nothing will make me regard the matter differently. And so let us change the subject, for I have something else to tell you."

"Something less painful, I hope," she said, trying to smile.

"On the contrary, much more painful, because it means separation," he replied.

"Separation! Royall!"

"There seems nothing else possible," he said, throwing his arm around her. "Of course, it will be only a short separation——"

"I will not hear of it,—I will not consent to it!" she cried, as she clung to him. "There can be no

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separation for us ever again. If you are going to America, I will go with you."

"To America,—I?" He laughed scornfully. "No; I am done with America. My cousin can take my place with my father, and inherit Harcourt Manor if he likes. I am going to make a place for myself over here. Up to this time I have played at work, but now I shall go to work in earnest; and if I have any real talent as an artist, it shall be made to tell."

She drew back a little, and looked at him apprehensively.

"Royall," she said, "tell me at once what this means—what you have in your mind to do?"

"What I have in my mind," he replied, "and what is also settled, is that I am going to Africa with Lemontier."

"You are going to Africa!" she repeated, amazed. "And you think that I will allow you to go and leave me behind?"

"Dear heart, I have no choice!" he told her. "I must go; for there is no other way of finding the money to pay my debts."

"Oh, yes, there is another way!" she cried eagerly. "I can go back to the stage. My place is open to me,—I have been assured of that. One season's earnings——"

But she broke off, as he turned upon her almost fiercely.

"Never mention such a thing again!" he said. "What do you think of me that you imagine I would tolerate it for a moment? Do you really believe that, after I have taken you from the stage and made you

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my wife, I would suffer you to go back in order to earn money to pay my debts?"

"Ah, how can you be so proud where I am concerned?" she asked reproachfully. "If we are one, what difference does it make which of us supplies the money for our needs?"

"It makes all the difference in the world," he answered. "A man who could let his wife work for money, especially to pay his debts, while he was able to lift a finger, would not in my opinion be worthy to be called a man at all. And as for the stage, you shall never for any reason set your foot upon it again while I live. I will not share you with the public."

"My poor Royall, you are absolutely medieval in your views," she sighed, laughing a little. "Well, then, if you will not let me help you by my one talent, you cannot refuse to take me with you to Africa, if you are determined to go there."

"My darling," he said, "I wish that I could; but that again is impossible!"

"Why?"

"Because Lemontier is under contract to supply some articles about Morocco, and that is not a country for women, you know."

"Nor for men, either, who value their lives," she said gravely; "and you should value yours for my sake, if not for your own. Oh, what madness has prompted you to think of such a thing!"

"Not madness, but necessity," he answered. "You see, it happened this way. I dropped into the bank as soon as I reached Paris, and there found my father's letter, which had just arrived. It was a terrible blow to me, as you may imagine; for I

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was face to face with my overdraft and many other debts, and no means available to meet them. I left the bank, filled with something like despair, and wandered about for a time, trying to think how I could raise some money, before I remembered that Lemontier wanted to see me. More to divert my mind than anything else, I went to the place he had appointed, and found him waiting impatiently. At once he told me what he wanted. He is going on this important mission to Morocco, and it has been left to him to select the artist who is to accompany him. He has always liked my black and white work, and, therefore, he paid me the great compliment of selecting me. All was arranged, in case I consented. He even named the price that *L'Illustration* will pay for my sketches. And it was a price that almost took my breath away; for it will cover all that I owe and leave a good surplus. Moira, how could I hesitate? The offer was so unexpected, so wonderful, coming just when it did, that it almost seemed miraculous. And if I am to turn my attention to illustrating as a money-making branch of art, I could not afford to neglect such an opening as this."

His last words were an appeal as well as a statement of fact,—an appeal for comprehension, to which Moira responded with the same extraordinary reasonableness she had displayed in regard to his father's letter.

"Yes," she said. "I see that, under the circumstances, you could not afford to neglect such an opening. But, Royall, how can I let you go!"

"It will not be for long, dear love!" he assured

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her. "Lemontier does not expect to be gone more than two or three months——"

"Two or three months! Ah, that will seem an age!"

"An age for me," he assented sadly; "but it is absolutely necessary that I should show my father that I can be independent of him, as well as that I should pay my debts. Now" (he sprang to his feet) "let us go out for our last row on the river, since to-morrow we must return to Paris."

CHAPTER III

IT WAS one of those accidents of life which have such far-reaching results as to lead one to question whether they are really accidents at all, which brought Royal Harcourt, the next day, along the Rue de la Paix at the exact moment when a lady stepped out of the door of one of the famous establishments which line that thoroughfare, so that they met face to face on the pavement. Each paused involuntarily at sight of the other.

"Why, Royall, I'm delighted to see you!" the lady cried, holding out her hand; while Harcourt responded warmly:

"My dear Mrs. Granger, what an unexpected pleasure to meet *you*! I hadn't an idea that you were in Paris."

"Of course not, since I arrived only yesterday," she answered. "We've been in London, enjoying the Coronation, and all the rest of it, for a month past. But Robert is called home by business, and I think I will return with him; so I've run over to Paris for a few days' shopping before we sail."

"Is Granger with you?"

"No; he remained in London, being better entertained there; and I was glad he preferred to stay. A man is dreadfully in the way when there is shopping to be done."

"No doubt," Harcourt laughed; "so I'll take myself off at present. But I should like to know when

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I can see you; for"—he hesitated a little—"I have some news to tell you."

Something in his tone arrested the lady's attention. She glanced at him quickly.

"What kind of news? What have you been doing?" she questioned.

Again he laughed, while his eyes met hers in a bright, direct gaze.

"I have been marrying," he answered.

"Marrying!" she gasped. "Do you mean that you are married?"

"But naturally—what else could I mean?" he replied. "I have been married for a month."

"Royall! You take my breath away! To whom are you married?"

"To some one of whom you are not likely ever to have heard," he told her, "but concerning whom you will hear many things which are not true when you return home. Therefore, I want to prepare you by letting you hear the truth from me. So, when can I see you?"

"Now, at once," she answered eagerly. "Do you suppose I could wait to hear about anything so astonishing as this?"

"But you are shopping——"

"Fiddlesticks for the shopping! There are some things even more interesting than choosing clothes. Come and lunch with me—I'm at the Hôtel Ritz—and tell me everything."

And so a little later, as they sat together at luncheon, in the restaurant of the Ritz, Harcourt told the story of his impulsive marriage, to an intensely interested and sympathetic listener.

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"You see," he said, "my father has conceived the altogether mistaken idea that I met Moira in the student society of the Latin Quarter,—a society of which he knows nothing, but which he imagines to be steeped in equal parts of dissipation and immorality. Now, of course, it would be no argument against her if I *had* met her there; but, as a matter of fact, she has never had any connection with the *quartier* at all. Up to the time of her father's death she led the ordinary sheltered life of a well-born French girl. But M. Deschanel left an estate hopelessly involved; her mother was a charming but helpless woman, and it was necessary for Moira to find some work by which she could support her mother and herself. She had always showed strong dramatic talent, and by the advice of her friends she began to prepare for the stage. During this time I did not know her at all. I never saw or heard of her until her *début* last winter, when she appeared as 'La Princess Lointaine,' and astonished and charmed all Paris by her interpretation of the part."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Granger. "Was she *that* actress? I heard some one speaking of her only the other day,—of how exquisitely she acted in Rostand's poetical play. How on earth, you amazing boy, did you induce her, after such a success, to think of marrying you?"

"It was amazing, wasn't it?" Harcourt agreed humbly. "I'm still wondering at it myself. The only explanation is that we fell in love with each other in the most overwhelming fashion. I was wild about her from the moment I first saw her on the stage—she was like a creature from dreamland in

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that part,—and she is good enough to say that she reciprocated the sentiment as soon as we met. But there could have been no question of our marriage for a long time, if ever—she told me so frankly as soon as I spoke of love to her,—if her mother had not suddenly died soon after her success was made. The blow nearly broke her heart, and seemed to take all incentive for further effort from her. It also left her singularly alone in the world; and so it came about that when I begged her to give up the dramatic career, for which she no longer cared, and marry me, she consented, and we were married at once.”

“I see!” Mrs. Granger nodded. “I see perfectly how it came about with *her*. In the first shock of a great grief everything loses its savor, and we cannot believe that anything in life ever will be as it has been before. Then your love appealed to her irresistibly in her loneliness and sadness, and so—and so—oh, the situation jumps at the eyes, as the French say. *Your* side of it, of course, requires no explanation at all; but is it possible that you took such a step without letting your father know what you were about to do?”

“It was inexcusable of me,” he confessed; “but the whole affair went like a flash. After Madame Deschanel’s death I was so absorbed in Moira—in her grief, and in trying to bring her to see things as I saw them—that I really never thought of my father. You needn’t say that I should have thought of him, for I know that I should. But the plain fact is—I didn’t.”

“And you an only son, and the pride of your father’s heart! O Royall, Royall!”

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"An only son, yes—but not the pride of my father's heart," he corrected her. "He has always regarded me with anything but pride,—on the contrary, with strong disapproval. Paul Lyndon is the type he likes: *he* should have been his son, not I."

"Perhaps so," Mrs. Granger agreed, a little dryly; "but, you see, he isn't. You are your father's son, and you can't shift your duty to Paul Lyndon's shoulders. Your conduct must have wounded him to the quick—that is" (suspiciously), "if you have even yet told him of your marriage."

"I have told him," Harcourt informed her; "and as a result I can assure you that he appears to be much more angered than wounded."

"Well, that's natural, isn't it,—I mean the anger?" she returned. "Of course, he is angry, and he has a right to be angry; but I am sure he is deeply wounded, too."

"It's possible," Harcourt admitted; "but I can only say that he doesn't express anything of the kind. His anger is very distinctly expressed, however; and, while I agree with you that he has a right to be angry with me, I must draw the line at insulting language about Moira."

"Royal, you *know* that Governor Harcourt never was guilty of using insulting language about any woman in his life."

"As a rule, that is true," Royall assented; "but he has made an exception with regard to my wife. Disregarding and disbelieving what I have told him about her, he has imagined a vicious adventuress—drawn apparently from the type of one or two stage celebrities whom the journals of Europe and Amer-

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ica have lately been advertising—and, on the strength of this baseless conception, has written of her in terms that I will never forgive.”

Mrs. Granger looked at him aghast.

“Are you mad?” she exclaimed. “How dare you say that you will never forgive your father, when it is you who have acted badly toward him?”

“We can leave my conduct aside,” the young man replied. “He might have said what he pleased of that, and I should not have resented it; but when, without knowledge or provocation, he insults Moira, that is past pardoning, though he is my father.”

“But he is not insulting *her* if, as you say, he has conceived an idea of some one totally different from her.”

“That is what Moira contends, but I cannot agree to it. It is of her that he is writing, and of no one else; and unless he apologizes for what he has said I will have nothing more to do with him.”

“Moira must be as sensible and reasonable as you are proving yourself otherwise,” Mrs. Granger remarked severely. “It is certainly reversing the usual order of things for the son to renounce the father, instead of the father the son, when the latter has acted as you have done.”

“Oh,” cried Harcourt, with a burst of quite genuine laughter, “you needn’t be afraid of the usual order being reversed! My father has done the renouncing on his side in the most approved fashion.”

“Royall!—do you really mean it?”

“I’ll show you how much I mean it—or perhaps I should say how much *he* means it,” the young man answered. He thrust his hand into the breast pocket

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of his coat, and, drawing out his father's letter, handed it to her across the table. "I wouldn't show that to any one else," he said; "but you are such an old friend that you are like a member of the family, and I want you to understand the situation exactly."

Mrs. Granger took the letter, and, opening, read it with eager interest. When she presently laid it down and looked again at her companion, her eyes were full of sadness.

"The poor Governor!" she said. "He is angry and prejudiced, and ignorant of what he is writing about, as you say; but can't you see that, under it all, his heart is nearly broken by your conduct?"

Harcourt shook his head.

"I don't see it and I don't believe it," he answered. "But even if it were so, it would be no excuse for what he has written of Moira. I don't mean to be rude, but really there's no good in arguing that point further."

"But, my dear boy, putting feeling and duty aside, how can you afford to take such a position when you see what he says about—about——"

"About money? I assure you I see that very distinctly."

"Well, then, how can you do it? Of course," the speaker added hastily, "I'm taking for granted that you wouldn't wish your wife to return to the stage."

"I shouldn't stop short with not wishing it: I should never allow her to do so," Harcourt said.

"That's as I thought. But how else are you to live, if you quarrel with your father?"

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"It's evident that you don't give me credit for any capacity of earning an honest penny," the young man remarked, with a dash of bitterness in his tone. "Don't apologize!" he cried, as she opened her mouth to speak. "It's a very natural opinion, and one that my father shares. And there's so much justice in it that I have never yet earned any money worth speaking of. But you'll be glad to hear, perhaps, that I am about to earn some."

"Are you really? In what way?"

"*Mirabile dictu*, by the talent my friends have held so lightly. I shall probably never be much of an artist in the use of color; but in black and white I have made enough of a reputation, even in this city of artists, to be asked to accompany one of the foremost journalists in Paris on a mission to Morocco, and *L'Illustration* has agreed to pay a high price for my sketches."

Mrs. Granger leaned forward and stretched out her hand across the table.

"Congratulations!" she exclaimed, in a tone of the most sincere pleasure. "I'm simply delighted! Tell me all about it."

Then, nothing loath, Harcourt told her all about it. He described the position in which his father's ultimatum with regard to money had placed him, and the wonderful, the almost miraculous, relief that had come with Lemontier's proposal.

"Of course, I could do nothing but accept it," he said; "although it means separation from Moira, which is terribly hard on both of us."

"It is hard," Mrs. Granger agreed, with ready sympathy. "But I suppose it will not be for long."

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"I don't know how long it may be,—Lemontier himself doesn't know," Harcourt replied. "I can only hope for the best, and Moira is very brave. She wants to go to Algiers, so that I can more easily rejoin her when the work is over; but I had rather that she stayed in France."

"Algiers would certainly not be pleasant at this season."

"Very far from it, and really there would be little or nothing to be gained by it; for when my work is finished I can almost as quickly rejoin her here."

"If she's as sensible as you think, I'm sure she'll recognize that. And meanwhile I am immensely eager to meet her."

"I was about to ask if I might bring her to see you," Harcourt said quickly.

"Better than that: I'll go to see her, if you've no objection."

"That is very kind of you," Harcourt answered gratefully; for Mrs. Granger was a person of great social importance, and seldom troubled herself to pay unnecessary visits. "I'll be delighted, and so will Moira. We are staying at a quiet hotel in the Rue St. Honoré. May I take you there now?"

Mrs. Granger glanced at her watch.

"Not now," she said; "for I have an engagement with such a high and mighty dressmaker that I couldn't venture to break it, and must go quickly in order to keep it. Tell your Moira—pretty name!—that I'll drop in about the tea hour, to take a cup of tea with her, if she'll be at home——"

"She certainly will be."

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"Well, let me have the exact address. And now I really must run away."

"I can't tell you how deeply I appreciate the time you've given me, and all your kindness," Harcourt said, as they rose together.

Mrs. Granger turned and laid her hand on his arm with an affectionate gesture.

"My dear boy," she said, "I would give much more than my time to help you, if I possibly could, in the unfortunate position in which you are placed. You must believe that."

"I do believe it, and I'm not the less grateful because there is no way in which you can help me," he told her, in a moved voice.

"That's to be seen," she answered, with a quick nod, as they parted.

It was several hours later—about the time she had indicated—that Mrs. Granger drove up to the hotel in the Rue St. Honoré where Mr. and Mrs. Royall Harcourt were staying since their unexpected return to Paris. She was at once shown to their apartments; and when she entered the small *salon*, her eyes were dazzled for a moment by the golden light which filled the room, as the level sunshine of late afternoon poured in through the open windows. Then she saw relieved against this flood of radiance—as the old painters were fond of relieving the figures of their saints—a tall, slender, black-clad figure, which moved toward her with outstretched hand and wonderfully graceful bearing.

"I am Royall's wife," a voice full of musical

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modulations told her; "and I am glad to meet one of his old friends."

"And one of his old friends is, I assure you, extremely glad to meet you," Mrs. Granger responded. "I wasn't aware that Royall had a wife until I met him by a very lucky accident this morning," she went on. "And I was so surprised when he told me what he had been doing that you might have knocked me down with a feather; but you'll forgive my saying that I am not at all surprised now."

"You are very good," Moira answered, as she drew the other toward a chair beside the low tea table. "Royall charged me with a thousand apologies for his absence," she said, as they sat down. "He was desolated not to be here to receive you, but M. Lemontier telephoned for him so imperatively that he was forced to go."

"There was no reason why he should have been desolated," Mrs. Granger remarked. "He knew that I was not coming to see him, and I am really glad that he isn't here. I think we can make acquaintance better without than with him."

Moira smiled, as she made an assenting movement of her charming head.

"I think so, too, now that I see you," she said. "I confess that I was sorry when he was called away, for I felt rather afraid of meeting you alone."

"I'm glad you perceive that there was nothing to be afraid of,—that I am not formidable at all."

Again an involuntary smile came around the girl's delicately curved lips.

"I am sure that at least you would never be formidable to your friends," she said.

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"That means that you believe I might be to those who are not my friends," Mrs. Granger returned, laughing a little. "I acknowledge that there are some people who think so, but you have keen observation to find it out already."

Moira did not say, as Mrs. Granger had said on an earlier occasion, that it "jumped at the eyes"; but she answered that there were persons who often seemed formidable without really intending to be so, and then added:

"Now will you let me give you a cup of tea? Royall tells me that you have been shopping all day, and that is tiresome work."

"Tiresome, yet fascinating, too,—especially in Paris," Mrs. Granger frankly admitted, as she drew off her gloves. "But, all the same, I am quite ready for a cup of tea."

While Moira poured out the fragrant tea, which had been drawing for the past few minutes over a spirit lamp, Mrs. Granger looked at her more critically than she had looked before, and owned to herself again that Royall's rash haste in marrying was hardly surprising. "She's an exquisite creature," she thought,—*"simply exquisite!* And she seems to be as sensible as she is beautiful. I wonder—I wonder——"

What she wondered made her silent for a few minutes while she drank her tea; and as she sat with absent gaze fastened on the opposite side of the room, Moira, on her part, had an opportunity to study this old friend of her husband who had come at such a critical time into her life.

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In the first place, she clearly perceived that the term "old friend" did not refer to age; for Mrs. Granger was still a young woman, as youth is reckoned in modern days. Moira guessed that she was not more than five or six years older than Royall; and also felt sure that, with the exception of slightly graying hair, she looked very much as she had looked at twenty and as she would continue to look at fifty. For there was no trace of fleeting bloom, of the *beauté de diable*, about this face, with its strong features, nondescript complexion, and keen, brown eyes; but there was the impress of a decided character, and a charm of kindness and humor, though the last was often caustic. Indeed, it was quite possible to call Emily Granger a handsome, as she had always been a very attractive, woman; and she had the assured ease of manner and bearing which comes readily to those who are born to social position and have always enjoyed the consideration that the world pays to the fortunate possessors of great wealth. These things Moira recognized at once; and she also recognized, or felt instinctively, the presence of a very warm heart, toward which her own went out in response.

So when Mrs. Granger presently brought her gaze back to the lovely face opposite her, with its crown of dusky hair, in which the sunlight was kindling threads of gold, she met such a friendly look in the deep-blue eyes that she leaned forward and uttered impulsively the thought that was in her mind.

"My dear," she said, "Royall has told me all about your marriage and the position in which it has placed him. Now you'll understand that I am not

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blaming you at all when I say that he has acted very badly toward his father——”

“Oh, but I am to be blamed!” Moira interposed quickly. “I should have inquired,—I should have thought of things that I did not think of, and insisted upon his doing what was right. But, you see, I was in deep grief, and absorbed in my own feelings, and so—and so——”

“And so you couldn’t look after his manifest duty,” Mrs. Granger concluded briskly. “I quite see that. Well, I was about to add that, since we both perceive that he has acted badly, can’t we find some way to put matters straight?”

“Ah, if we only could,” Moira cried, “I should be too happy! Dear Madame, if you can find the way—any way—I shall be ready to do whatever you advise. You could not ask anything so hard that I should not be glad to do it.”

“I thought I wasn’t mistaken in you,” Mrs. Granger remarked approvingly. “I’m something of a physiognomist myself. Since you feel this way, I am strongly in hope we can do something. Royall is so resentful that we might as well leave him alone for the present, and let him go to Africa, as he has determined to do.”

“Yes; I see no way to prevent that,” Moira assented sadly.

“It will do him good,” Mrs. Granger said, “besides giving him time to reflect; so we’ll make no further effort with *him*. What I want to do is to make his father understand that things are not at all as he imagines them. In other words, I want him to see and know you.”

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"But that is impossible," Moira cried, in a startled tone. "Think how far we are apart; and Royall has said that he will never consent to my taking any step toward changing his father's opinion of me, or leading to reconciliation."

"Royall is an idiot, an obstinate idiot, and ought to be ashamed of himself!" Mrs. Granger exclaimed angrily. "I really have no patience with him in this matter. Of course, the poor dear Governor has written a violent letter, full of ignorant prejudice——"

"You have read the letter?"

"Yes; Roy showed it to me. You know we are very old friends, and he wanted me to understand how inexcusably his father had expressed himself. Well, I grant that what he says of you would be inexcusable, if it were not so entirely written of a figment of his imagination."

"That is what I told Royall, but he wouldn't listen to me."

"He wouldn't listen to me, either; but when he said that my view was your view also, I began to have hope of doing something through you; and, now that I see you, I am sure it is possible."

"You are more than kind," Moira said gratefully. "But I do not see that anything can be done, unless you will be so good as to tell Governor Harcourt, when you return to America, that I am not the kind of person he thinks."

"I'll do that with pleasure," Mrs. Granger replied, holding out her cup for fresh tea. "But I'm sorry to say that the Governor is almost as obstinate as Roy—I would have said before this that he was

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more so,—and I fear that I shall not be able to convince him. No, there is only one person who can convince him, and that is yourself.”

“But it is impossible, absolutely impossible, for me to do so,” Moira repeated.

“There are very few things that are really impossible, if one sets one’s self to accomplish them,” Mrs. Granger responded. “Since I entered this room, a plan has come to me by which I believe we can accomplish this. I want to take you to America with me. Now,” she added hastily, “don’t say that’s impossible, as I see you are preparing to do. It is, on the contrary, extremely possible from every point of view. Here is Royall going to Africa, to be absent for an indefinite length of time, and intending to leave you alone in Paris. But, instead of that, how much better it would be for you to spend the time of his absence in paying a visit to America, and reconciling his father to what he has done!”

“He would never consent,—never!”

“Royall, do you mean? I’ll undertake to make him consent, if you are willing to go.”

Moira looked at her with an expression which showed the doubt and indecision of her mind.

“I said I would do whatever you advised,” she answered; “but I did not think of anything like this. And I am perfectly certain that Royall will never consent.”

“Again I say, leave Royall to me! Only decide for yourself whether or not you are brave enough to take the only step that can lead to reconciliation between father and son. I won’t press you for an immediate decision. I shall be in Paris two or three



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days longer, so you can think about it. Now tell me all about yourself, and your wonderful dramatic success, of which I heard before I knew that Roy had married 'La Princesse Lointaine,' over whom all Paris was raving."

CHAPTER IV

MOIRA proved to be right in her opinion that Harcourt would not consent—would, in fact, hardly listen—to the proposal that she should accompany Mrs. Granger to America.

"I don't know how you could imagine that I would consent to such a thing!" he declared, almost angrily. "Mrs. Granger must have lost her senses to propose it. I wonder that she doesn't see how it would look—in what a position it would place me—if you went over there alone, apparently to beg for the recognition which I had not manhood enough to demand for you."

"Oh, who could think anything like that of you!" cried Moira. "I am sure Mrs. Granger never dreamed of it."

"That's because she's entirely too fond of managing other people's affairs for them," Harcourt replied ungratefully. "She has always been inclined that way; and, as a result, she sees nobody's point of view but her own. Mine, however, is as clear as possible. My father and all my relatives and friends would draw but one conclusion if you appeared among them without me, and it would be a conclusion so unflattering to us both that I don't wish to dwell on it. It's enough to say that when you go to America I shall accompany you, and I will never permit you to occupy the false position of going there without me."

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Moirra did not answer, but her eyes, as she gazed at him, expressed such disappointment that he put out his hand impulsively to touch her.

"Dear heart," he said, "are you so sorry not to go? If there were no other reason against it, have you not thought what time and space it would put between us?"

"Yes, I have thought of that," she replied; "but, since we must be separated for a certain length of time, it seemed to me that if I could employ that time in doing something for you it might make separation less hard to bear."

"But what could you do for me by going to America?"

"Ah, surely you know what I desire to do? And Mrs. Granger thinks that if your father saw me he would be convinced that I am not the kind of woman he imagines me to be."

The blood rushed to Harcourt's face, while his jaw set grimly.

"And do you think I would allow you to go and show yourself in order to convince him?" he cried indignantly. "Do you really fancy that, though I refuse to make any advance toward him myself, I would permit you to make any? Once for all, put such an idea out of your head! Once for all, understand that I will never consent to an attempt of the kind."

"I will never make such an attempt without your consent," Moirra answered. "But I believe that you are wrong,—quite wrong. How is he ever to recognize his mistake if you are too proud to make the least effort to show it to him?"

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"You don't comprehend that I am proud on your behalf."

"Ah, yes, I comprehend that!" she said eagerly. "But don't *you* comprehend that it is terrible to me to feel myself a barrier between you and your father?"

"It is not you who are the barrier; it is his own violence and prejudice."

She shook her head.

"*C'est moi!*" she murmured. "And you will not let me even try to mend matters!"

"They will mend, perhaps, when I am a famous artist," he told her. "If not, it doesn't matter. Nothing matters so long as I have you, my princess! And now haven't we some engagement with that very interfering person, Mrs. Granger?"

"We have. She wants us to dine with her this evening, and I've promised that we will. I should not have been so ready to accept the invitation, since we have such short time left to be together, but that I hoped you might be persuaded to agree to what she proposes."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you both, but there's nothing less possible than my agreeing," Harcourt repeated firmly. "However, it's just as well that you accepted the invitation; for I want her to see more of you. And she is a friend worth cultivating, being not only a person of importance, but with a heart as large as it is warm."

"I think one feels that very quickly. I have quite fallen in love with her."

"And if she hasn't fallen in love with you, I'll be immensely surprised. It was a wonderful stroke

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of luck, her coming to Paris and my meeting her just at this time; for there's no one whose word at home carries more weight than hers, and she can tell everybody what you really are. Nevertheless, I'm sorry that she is going home just now; for there's nobody with whom I should like better to leave you, if she were only going to stay over here."

"Ah, if only——" Moira began; but checked herself, feeling the uselessness of any further effort to change Harcourt's determined opposition to the idea of her going to America, even under the powerful protection of Mrs. Granger.

And, having, as has been already intimated, a very reasonable mind, she was able, when the first keen disappointment subsided, to comprehend and even to sympathize with this opposition. For, considering the matter from his point of view, she perceived that he was right in feeling that it would not be consistent with his dignity to allow her to make her first appearance in his own country, among his own people, without his being at her side. Indeed, with a flash of illumination, this became so clear that she wondered at her own and Mrs. Granger's blindness. "How could we have imagined that he would consent to such a thing!" she thought,—“that he would be willing for his wife to appear in his home under any protection but his own! And he is right: it would not be worthy of him. And yet” (she sighed deeply) “if there were only some way of accomplishing his reconciliation with his father! Mrs. Granger has set her heart on this, and she will be almost as disappointed as I am.”

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Mrs. Granger was indeed not only almost but quite as disappointed as Moira herself when, after vainly trying to overcome Harcourt's opposition to the plan which she had been dwelling upon and elaborating for twenty-four hours, she finally realized the inflexible nature of his decision.

"I had no idea that you were as obstinate as twenty donkeys!" she cried at last, exasperated. "And this is not only obstinacy, but selfishness and pride as well."

"It may be all three," Royall agreed. "But don't you see, Miss Emily," (lapsing unconsciously into his boyhood's name for her), "that I couldn't possibly permit Moira to go with you to America, and retain my self-respect?"

"No, I don't see it," she returned. "To my mind, self-respect doesn't enter into the matter at all; only, as I've said, selfishness and pride."

"That's because you are not willing to consider it from any point of view but your own," he told her. "You mustn't think that I don't appreciate your kindness in taking so much interest in our affairs——"

"Why shouldn't I take interest in them?" she interrupted. "Haven't I been fond of you all your life? And you know how devoted I am to your father."

"And, therefore, you want to play the part of benevolent Providence toward us both," he said, smiling. "I quite understand, and I'm really very grateful——"

"You certainly appear so!"

"Don't be sarcastic. I am, whether I appear so or not. But, nevertheless, I must refuse my con-

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sent to the plan you've arranged, and I intend to make you acknowledge that I am right in refusing it."

"You can't do that."

"We'll see."

He rose as he spoke and stood before her, leaning one arm on the mantel-shelf; for they were in her private sitting-room, and had just finished their after-dinner coffee. Despite her exasperation with him, she could not but think how handsome and gallant he looked, as he stood, still smiling at her, with bright eyes and head thrown slightly back.

"Now," he said, "I put you on your honor to answer, without equivocation of any kind, when I ask what you would think of any other man whom you know among those at home, if he had married abroad as I have done; if he knew, as I know, that the most unjust and injurious things were said and thought of his wife; and yet if he permitted her to go alone for the first time to his country, to appear among his relatives and friends, without his being by her side?"

"She would not be alone!" Mrs. Granger exclaimed. "Do you count *me* nobody?"

"I count you a host, as you must know," he replied. "But, powerful and important as you are, you couldn't take my place. Nobody could take that, and—you haven't told me yet what you would think of such a man."

"I'd think that he was more sensible than you are."

"O Miss Emily, Miss Emily! Remember you are on your honor!"

"Royall, you know that the circumstances are ex-

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ceptional. Here you are, going away, leaving your wife alone——”

“I am leaving her in the city which has always been her home, and among her lifelong friends. But that's neither here nor there. It has no bearing on the point we are discussing—which is that, however much she were left here alone, she could not, as Mrs. Royall Harcourt, go to my country and among my friends without me. You know the world too well not to see and acknowledge this.”

Perhaps Mrs. Granger did see and acknowledge it, for she did not answer; she only leaned back in her chair and regarded him with an expression of intense vexation and disapproval—when, to the surprise of both, Moira suddenly rose from her seat and came to the side of the tall young man. Herself almost as tall as he, she made a picture of wonderful grace as she advanced and stood, in her clinging, trailing dress of soft, black chiffon, her white neck and lovely head rising, with lily-like effect, above the dark draperies.

“Dear Madame,” she said, in her low, rich voice, “I feel that I must tell you that, although I was yesterday as eager as you that Royall should consent to the plan you were so good as to propose, I now perceive quite clearly that he could not possibly do so.”

“Oh, he has convinced you, has he?” Mrs. Granger cried, sitting upright again. “I might have expected it. Well, of course, that ends the matter; and I can only remark that I think you are very foolish to be influenced by him.”

Moira shook her head, smiling slightly.

“Forgive me if I say that I can't believe that you

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really think so," she said. "I am sure you must feel that it is well for those who are married to see things as far as possible from the same point of view."

"I think that a woman has as much right to maintain her own point of view as a man has to maintain his," Mrs. Granger asserted stoutly.

"But you will not deny her the right to be convinced when it is made plain to her that his point of view is the right one," the winning voice replied; "and I have been convinced that Royall is right when he says that if I go to America as his wife he should be with me."

"There's something to be said for his opinion,—I'll have to own that," Mrs. Granger admitted reluctantly. "And, therefore, the only sensible thing for him to do is to give up his foolish plan of going to Morocco, and both of you come back with me to America."

But Royall, at this, threw back his head with a laugh equally compounded of scorn and amusement.

"Fancy it!" he cried. "Fancy me giving up my chance for a career of independence, leaving Lemon-tier in the lurch, and going back to America, like a disgraced schoolboy, to beg forgiveness and support from my father! My dear Mrs. Granger, I wonder if all my old friends know me as little as you seem to do?"

"It appears that I do know you very little," Mrs. Granger answered stiffly; "and, therefore, I should apologize for my interest in your affairs, and my possibly impertinent suggestions. At least I will make no more. Shall we change the subject?"

"No, no!" Moira exclaimed eagerly, before Har-

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court could reply. "We must not change the subject while you are vexed with Royall—who did not mean to be ungrateful for your kindness, I am sure, and before you hear a suggestion which I have to make, and to which I beg you both to listen patiently."

"Patience is not Miss Emily's strong point any more than it is mine," Harcourt observed, with a humorous glance at that lady; "but I hope she'll pardon me, as she's often had to do before. Let us hear what you have to say."

"It is simply this," Moira said, glancing from one to the other of the faces turned toward her: "we are all agreed that it would not do—it would not be *convenable*, as we say in French,—for Mrs. Royall Harcourt to go to America for the first time alone. But is there any reason why Moira Deschanel should not go?"

Both of her listeners stared at her for a moment uncomprehending. Then Royall said sharply:

"There is no longer such a person as Moira Deschanel; and if you mean that you should go to America masquerading under that name——"

"It would not be a masquerade," she interrupted. "I was born Deschanel, and I have a right to bear the name if I like. I should certainly use it if I returned to the stage."

"You will never return to the stage."

"*Eh, bien*, I have agreed to that," she said, spreading her hands with a Gallic gesture. "And now I ask you, on your side, to agree to my playing a little part on a private stage for a short—oh, very short!—time. I have a great desire to go to America with

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Mrs. Granger, since she is so good as to be willing to take me; and quietly, without compromising your dignity or pride in the least, to see for myself something of your home, and—and perhaps of your people."

The pleading in her tone was so sweet that Harcourt's inclination to anger melted under it. He laid his hand tenderly on her shoulder.

"Moira, what a child you are still!" he said. "And how strong the dramatic impulse is in you! It is as you've said: you have arranged a drama in which you will play a part that appeals to you very much——"

"Very much, indeed," she said.

"And the dénouement is quite clear in your mind," he went on. "The angry father is to be charmed and to relent, the disowned son to be recalled from exile; and the curtain to go down on a scene of reconciliation and happiness, flooded with rosy light. Ah, dreamer, don't you know that things do not happen like that in real life?"

"Why shouldn't they?" she murmured in protest.

"Yes, why shouldn't they?" Mrs. Granger echoed belligerently. "It's nonsense to say that things never happen in real life except in a disagreeable and unpleasant way. We all know better than that. We all know that agreeable and desirable things often come to pass in the most unexpected manner."

"You give yourself away with that word," Harcourt told her mockingly. "It is certainly most unexpected, because most unusual, when agreeable and desirable things come to pass; and, therefore, it will not do to count on them."

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"Nor to make any effort to bring them about? In that case, why are you going to Morocco?"

"An irrelevant inquiry," he returned. "I am going to Morocco in pursuit of reputation and money—two very tangible and attainable things. But this dreamer" (he laid his hand again on Moira's shoulder) "has imagined a drama with an ending like a fairy-tale, which is altogether impossible."

"I see no impossibility in it. I believe that it might really come to pass, just as she imagines it, if you will be kind enough not to interfere."

"But I must interfere when what she wants to do is not only absurdly romantic and foredoomed to failure, but when it would place us both in a position quite as undignified as if she went, according to your original plan, under her proper name."

"How could that be, since no one would know her as Mrs. Royall Harcourt?"

Again the young man laughed.

"My dear lady," he said, "have you forgotten the press? Do you suppose that any amount of gossip has not been published about our marriage, and that even those who know little or nothing of the French stage will not remember that Moira Deschanel was the name of the actress whom Royall Harcourt married? And, moreover, as a matter of simple fact, I mentioned the name in my letter to my father."

The faces of both Mrs. Granger and Moira looked rather blank at this, but the former was the first to rally.

"We might have thought of that," she said. "Naturally you would mention the name of the woman you had married in announcing your marriage

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to your father. Well, my dear" (she spoke to Moira), "this only means that we must find another name for you."

"It means nothing of the kind!" Harcourt exclaimed. "I will not permit her to go under a false name, any more than under her own."

"My mother's name would not be a false name," Moira said; "for I should have a right to assume it."

"What was your mother's name?" Mrs. Granger inquired:

"She was Moira Fortescue."

"Good,—very good!" Mrs. Granger beat her hands together softly. "The name suits you admirably, and you have a perfect right to use it, if you like."

"She has not a perfect right to set my wishes at defiance!" Harcourt broke in, now white with anger. "I will not permit such a masquerade under any circumstances."

"I think you will permit it, if you will listen to me for a few minutes," Moira said, turning toward him; and Mrs. Granger was struck by a note in her voice which seemed to take command of the situation, although its gentleness remained unchanged. "You force me to remind you," she went on, "how many times, and in how many things, I have yielded to your wishes in matters more important than this of which we are talking. You know what I gave up when I left the stage to marry you——"

He bent his head.

"You gave up a brilliant career and the prospect of a large fortune," he replied. "I can never forget it; but is it generous to remind me of it—now?"

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She laid her hand on his arm with an appealing gesture.

"It would not be generous if I had not a reason which justifies the reminding," she said. "But let me go on, for I must put my claim fully before you. Again, although it would be very easy for me to return to the stage and there make money enough for our needs, I yielded to your wishes prohibiting this, and submitted to all that it entailed—the pain of separation, of anxiety for me and danger for you—in your going to Morocco. I have also yielded to your wish that I will not go to Algiers, in order to be near you. And now when, in return for all this, I ask one little yielding to my wishes on your part, you are not willing to make it."

The reproach of the last words was more effective from the unchanged gentleness of her tone; and Harcourt stared at her for a moment silently, as if for the first time realizing these things; while Mrs. Granger sat watching the two, who were altogether absorbed in each other, with what she afterward described as "the keenest sense of drama" she had ever known.

"Moirs," Harcourt said at last, "you make me seem an ingrate in my own eyes; but how can I consent to what you wish to do?"

"I think that you will consent if you look at it from my point of view," she answered. "Consider for a moment how lonely I shall be, left here without you, with nothing to do but eat out my heart with anxiety and longing, and also with grief; for how can I be alone in Paris and not grieve for my mother?"

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"My dear, my dear," he said, "I had not thought of that! You shall not stay in Paris: you shall go somewhere else,—to some quiet place at the seaside."

"And what should I do in such a place but think and long and grieve in utter loneliness?" she asked. "Don't misunderstand me: I am not complaining. I would not mention these things if there were nothing else to be done: I should simply endure them as best I could. But a chance has come, which seems as if it must have been sent by *le bon Dieu* Himself at this exact time, for me to do something else,—something which may be worth doing in every sense, but which at the very least will help me to bear the pain of separation as nothing else could."

"Moira," Harcourt cried, "you leave me nothing to say except that it is against my judgment, utterly against my judgment, that you should do this thing!"

"Dear heart," she returned, "is it not rather against your pride?"

"Against both pride and judgment," he admitted. "I should not wish you to do it, if it were quite certain that you could sustain the masquerade successfully,—that it would never be known who you really were. But sooner or later it must be known; indeed, you would be likely to be recognized at any moment."

"I recognized! By whom? I have no acquaintances in America."

Harcourt glanced at Mrs. Granger with what might be described as an unamused smile.

"Did you ever hear anything more simple than that?" he asked. "She knows nothing of the wandering propensities of our countrypeople, and she

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forgets how many of them may have seen her when she was appearing on the stage and all Paris was talking about her."

"I'm not sure of that,—I mean about many of them having seen her," Mrs. Granger answered. "You know that the average American doesn't go to see good French plays, because, as a rule, he doesn't understand the language and is not cultured enough to appreciate fine acting. The entertainments he seeks are of an altogether different kind."

"True; but there are Americans who both understand French and appreciate fine acting, and no one of these in Paris last winter could have missed 'La Princesse Lointaine.'"

"Even so, do you imagine that such a spectator would be likely to recognize her" (she pointed to Moira) "without the stage illusions under which he saw her?"

"And remember the costume of 'La Princesse Lointaine'!" Moira quickly interposed. "The difference of dress alone would be an effective disguise."

Harcourt shook his head.

"You are mistaken," he said. "Your face is not one that could ever be forgotten, no matter how different the costumes that you wore."

"Now, see here!" said Mrs. Granger, in her most emphatic manner. "This matter must be settled; and there's only one way to settle it, as far as I can perceive. Your wife has put her case unanswerably, Royall. She has reminded you of the many occasions on which she has yielded to your wishes, and made great sacrifices for you; and in return she asks—I think myself that she might demand—that you

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shall yield to her wishes in the matter we've been discussing at such length. You are going away, all on account of your obstinate pride; and, since you are leaving her, you have no right to insist that she shall stay here alone, with sadness and grief for her companions, when she might be with me, having her mind diverted by the interesting sights of a world altogether new to her, and her time occupied——"

"How?" It was a sharp interrogation with which Royall interrupted. "How do you intend that she shall occupy her time, since I presume that you hardly propose to introduce her into society under an assumed name?"

"I should not think of such a thing," Mrs. Granger answered. "She will simply be known to the few people whom she may meet as a friend who has come over to spend a few weeks with me. We shall live very quietly—I promise you that,—and I really don't see how you can persist in refusing to let her do this on which her heart is set."

"If her heart is set on doing it, I can't refuse," he said; "but I repeat that my judgment is unalterably opposed to it, and I believe that you will both be forced to acknowledge in the end that my judgment is right."

Moira looked up at him with lovely, light-filled eyes.

"In that case," she said, "you may be sure that I, for one, will not hesitate to acknowledge it, and say my *meâ culpâ* with contrition."

"Ah, but contrition cannot change consequences!" he replied.

CHAPTER V

PERHAPS it was as well that M. Lemontier was in such haste to be off on his mission to Morocco that he hurried Harcourt away rather unexpectedly on the day following the evening spent with Mrs. Granger, when the momentous decision that Moira could go to America with the latter was reached; or else it might readily have happened that the young man would have reconsidered the consent which had been wrung from him. For there was no doubt that, with reflection, his dislike increased rather than diminished for the plan which in his own mind he stigmatized as "romantic folly," and against which his pride revolted as equally undignified for Moira and for himself. But the sudden call for departure left him without time to make any other arrangement for Moira during his absence. And, after all, it was a comfort to leave her under the protection of one so capable and so kind as he knew his old friend, Mrs. Granger, to be.

"Only take care," he said to Moira, in the midst of the hurried preparations for his journey, "that you do not permit yourself to be led into making any overtures of reconciliation to my father. That is something I should never tolerate or forgive. And since your heart is so set on doing this, which I disapprove, I think that, rather than have you masquerading under a name which is not your own——"

"It is a name which I have a right to bear," Moira repeated once more.

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"That may be; but the fact remains that it is not mine, which is the only name proper for you to bear. And, therefore, if you will not be satisfied without going to America, I prefer that you shall go openly as Mrs. Royall Harcourt."

Moir's eyes expanded.

"But you said——" she began.

"I know," he interrupted impatiently. "I said that you should not appear there as my wife unless I was with you. Well, I'm still of that opinion: you certainly should not do so. But of two evils one must choose the lesser; and it appears to me very much the lesser evil that you should go bearing your own name than that you should be discovered, as must inevitably occur, masquerading under another."

"You are very fond of that word 'masquerading,'" Moira remarked.

"I am not fond of it at all,—quite the contrary," he replied; "but it is the only word which describes what you want to do."

Moir's did not answer; and, as she gazed at him, he might have read, had he looked at her, a dawning indecision in her eyes. She was, in fact, almost tempted to say, "Since you feel so strongly about this, and disapprove so utterly, I will give up the idea and remain in France." But he did not look toward her; and while she hesitated—held back by one instinct, urged to speak by another,—he began to talk of what was needed in the way of preparation for his journey. "I shall want a sun-helmet," he said. And as Moira assented to this, she told herself that it was best not to make an impulsive promise; it would be better to talk the matter over with Mrs. Granger

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later; and if she then decided to do what Royall wished rather than what she herself desired, her first letter to him could convey the news.

So in the short time which remained before his departure little more was said about the American visit. And when the final moment of separation came, the pain of parting was so sharp on both sides—and on Moira's side intensified by an overwhelming fear of worse parting to come—that she could only hold Royall in an embrace that seemed as if it would never let him go, while her white lips could find no words in which to express the anguish that tore her heart.

"My love, my dearest love, take courage!" he said, startled by the intensity of her grief. "Our separation is only for a little while. We shall very soon be together again."

"May the good God grant it!" she whispered; but deep in her soul an instinct said, "Never again!—never again!" And it was this instinct which tightened the clasp of her arms about him until he could hardly release himself without employing a strength he did not wish to exert.

"Moira," he cried appealingly, "you have always been brave; you won't fail me now! Dear, I must go,—you must let me go!"

"Yes, I must let you go," she answered, rallying all her powers to respond to the appeal, and forcing her arms to fall from around him. Then, lifting her hand, she made the sign of the cross upon his brow, and with this gesture of blessing and farewell motioned him away.

He rushed for his waiting cab, but paused *en route*

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to the railway station to see Mrs. Granger for a few minutes, and beg her to go to Moira as soon as possible.

"When I realize how she is suffering I am torn with regret for the necessity of leaving her," he said; "but it is too late to change anything now. I must go with Lemontier, since I have agreed to do so; and I don't know how long we may be gone, nor how far his plans may carry us; but I want to tell you that, since this is so, I am glad that you are going to take Moira away with you. I would rather that it were anywhere else than to America, but even America will be better for her than Paris just now."

"I am certain of that," Mrs. Granger replied; "and you may be sure that I will take good care of her."

"I am sure of it," he said, wringing her hand in a painful grasp. "I trust her to you, and I only make the condition that no overtures of any kind shall be made to my father."

"Royall, do you really think that is right?" his friend asked gravely.

"Right or wrong, it is the one condition upon which I consent to her going," he answered. "For the rest, I leave everything to you, with equal confidence in your kindness and your judgment."

"I will try to deserve your confidence," she told him, much moved. "And now, dear boy, God bless you and bring you back safe from those dreadful African places you should never have agreed to go into!"

"I had no choice," he said. "Good-by, with heart-

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felt thanks for all your kindness! And you'll see Moira soon?"

"At once," she answered.

But, although she was as good as her word, she did not find Moira at home when she reached the hotel in the Rue St. Honoré.

"Madame went out almost immediately after Monsieur left," she was told by her maid.

"Have you any idea where she went?" Mrs. Granger asked.

Oh, yes, the maid had a very clear idea as to that! She had no doubt that Madame would be found in some nearby church, praying for Monsieur's safe journey and speedy return; and she even suggested that St. Philippe du Roule would probably be this church.

But Mrs. Granger felt that she could not follow Moira to such a refuge; and she contented herself with leaving her card, on which she wrote:

"I shall return at five o'clock this afternoon, to take you away with me; so be ready to go."

Notwithstanding this message, however, Mrs. Granger had really little expectation of finding Moira prepared for such decisive action. She was, therefore, not surprised when, on being ushered at the appointed hour into the same sun-flooded little *salon* where she had been before, she was met by a pale girl, whom grief seemed to have robbed of vitality and about whom there were no indications of intended departure.

Although perceiving this, Mrs. Granger chose to ignore it.

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"I hope you are ready to come away with me at once," she said, as she sat down. "I'm sure you must feel that it is the best thing to do."

But Moira's eyes, filled with intense sadness, expressed no assent to this statement as they met her own.

"Forgive me if I say that I do not feel that it would be the best thing to do," she answered. "You are very kind to wish to take me away, but I think it better that I should remain here for the present."

"What do you mean by the present?" Mrs. Granger inquired. "Of course, if it's only to-night that you are speaking of, there's no objection to your remaining here, but I think it would be much better for you to spend the night at my hotel, and be ready to go to London with me to-morrow."

Moira clasped the slender hands that lay in her lap tightly together, as if nerving herself for an effort.

"Dear Madame," she said, "you will certainly think me very changeable, and you may also think me very ungrateful, when I tell you that I have decided not to go with you, but to remain in France, as Royall wished me to do."

Mrs. Granger nodded with the air of one who sees her own prescience justified.

"I rather expected this," she said. "It's very natural. I understand exactly how you have arrived at such a conclusion. You are grieving over Royall's departure, and you blame yourself for having maintained your own wishes against his."

"Yes, I blame myself very much," Moira assented. "I not only maintained my wishes, but I forced him

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to yield to them against his judgment; and that was wrong,—I recognize it now. And, recognizing it, I have decided that I will not do what he so deeply disapproved."

"In other words, you are anxious to make a sacrifice of your own wishes, as a kind of holocaust on the altar of affection," Mrs. Granger commented. "My dear, it is an impulse that all except very selfish people are likely to feel at such times of separation. But you may believe me that it is on the present occasion entirely uncalled for. I assure you I have good reason to know that, instead of gratification, Royall would be very sorry if he heard that you had changed your plans and decided to remain here alone, instead of coming away with me."

"How can you know this?" Moira asked, in a startled tone.

"Because he came to see me this morning on his way to the railway station," Mrs. Granger answered. "And shall I tell you exactly what he said? Well, in the first place, he, too, was suffering from the same kind of remorse that you are feeling, and with a good deal more reason. 'When I see how she is suffering I am torn with regret for the necessity of leaving her; but it is too late to change anything now,' he said (implying that he would have changed it if he could). And then he added: 'I am glad that you are going to take her away with you. . . . Even America will be better for her than Paris just now.'"

"You are quite certain he said that?" Moira asked.

"I am absolutely certain," Mrs. Granger replied.

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"And he added also: 'I leave everything to you' (that's *me*), 'with equal confidence in your kindness and your judgment.' So you see, my dear, that he has put you into my hands, and that it would be anything but a comfort to him to learn that, under a mistaken idea of sacrificing your wishes to his, you insisted upon remaining here in loneliness and sadness, instead of coming with me and finding diversion for your mind during his absence, as well as a possible chance of doing a work of reconciliation between his father and himself."

"Ah, there is no hope of that!" Moira said sadly. "He has positively forbidden any effort of the kind. In that at least I must obey him; and, realizing this, after his departure this morning, I said to myself: 'Since I am forbidden to make any attempt to reconcile his father to our marriage, there is no reason for my going to America, except a reason of self-gratification, which it is well that I should sacrifice.'"

"There I differ with you," Mrs. Granger returned briskly. "Even self-gratification is allowable sometimes, and it is clearly allowable in this case. Besides, I don't by any means give up hope of your presence in America leading to the reconciliation we both desire; although I own that we are bound to abstain from any direct attempt to bring it about, since that's the condition Royall has made in giving his consent to your going. But if Governor Harcourt could see you—by chance, as it were,—and if he could then learn who you are——"

A sudden gleam in Moira's glance made the speaker pause.

"Did Royall tell you that he had changed his mind

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about my going to America under his name, and would prefer it?" the girl asked quickly.

"No; he had not time to tell me. Did he really say so? Well, that proves he's growing more reasonable. Did he make it a condition also?"

"On the contrary, he left the decision to your judgment and mine. He only said that he would prefer it to my 'masquerading' under a name not really mine."

"We must take a little time to consider the matter," Mrs. Granger said. "I should think that it was decidedly better for you to go openly as Mrs. Royall Harcourt (for I could make it clear to every one why Royall was not with you), but for the fact that it would defeat all hope of bringing you under the notice of Governor Harcourt. He would take very good care never to see you if he knew you to be his son's wife; and since you, on your part, are bound not to approach him, we should find ourselves in an *impasse*, as far as any hope of reconciliation is concerned. Besides, I think he would consider your coming as a kind of defiance of him, and, therefore——"

"Therefore, you believe that I should not go under that name?"

"Considering the chief object that we both have in view—the bringing those two proud and obstinate men together if possible,—I think your idea of taking another name is best. It does savor a little of romance and drama, as Royall said. But, after all, romance and drama are founded on real life; and things more dramatic than any that find their way upon the stage are constantly occurring. I'm not

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a afraid of the charge of being romantic, and I don't suppose you are——"

" 'La Princesse Lointaine' hardly could be," Moira laughed gently.

"Then let us have the courage of our romanticism, and proceed boldly with the drama we have planned. The princess from far away shall go *incognita* to try to conquer the realm of hearts that she is made to conquer——"

"Ah, you are indeed kind!" the princess cried, with eyes that shone through sudden moisture.

"No, only truthful," Mrs. Granger said; "and I am also of a disposition that likes to surmount difficulties. 'Anybody can do easy things,' my father used to say: 'I like to accomplish hard things.' He accomplished many, and I have inherited his nature. Difficulties put me on my mettle."

"You remind me of Browning's——

I count life but a stuff
To try the soul's strength on,"

Moira said.

"That's it exactly," Mrs. Granger responded. "And, unless I'm much mistaken, you count it the same thing. Well, we've settled once for all, I think, that there's to be no more wavering. You are going to America; and, this being so, there's no earthly reason why you should stay here in loneliness to-night. Call your maid and tell her to put up what is immediately necessary—she can finish the rest afterward,—and come with me to my hotel; for I promised Royall I would take care of you, and see that you weren't left to grieve too much."

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After this, as Mrs. Granger said, there was no more wavering on Moira's part. Her resolve finally taken, the preparations for her journey were soon made, and she was ready to accompany her new friend to London the next day.

"There are a few points which we must settle," observed Mrs. Granger, as they sat together, with a growing sense of intimacy, in the evening. "In the first place, if we are to leave Mrs. Royall Harcourt in Paris, you must also leave your maid behind. There is no help for that."

"I have not thought of anything else," Moira answered. "If there were no other reason for leaving her, it would be an extravagance to take her along, because I have really no need of a maid."

"Her place can easily be supplied if you should feel the need," Mrs. Granger said, in the tone of one who has never known difficulty in supplying any need. "And now a more important point: you are going to meet my husband in London, and I shall introduce you to him as Miss Fortescue. I have decided that it will be best not to take him into our confidence as to who you really are."

Moira looked a little startled at this.

"But when he finds out who I really am—and, of course, he must find out in time,—will he not think that you should have taken him into your confidence?" she asked.

"He never thinks that anything should be different from the way in which I arrange it," Mrs. Granger replied. "He's very satisfactory in that respect. And my experience with both men and women is that, if you have a secret to keep, the fewer people

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who know it the better. Nobody can betray, either by intention or by indiscretion, what he or she doesn't know. Robert would never intend to betray anything which was confided to him, but it's quite possible that he might betray it by indiscretion. At all events, we'll be on the safe side, and give him no chance to do so."

"How, then, will you account for my being with you?" Moira inquired, deeply astonished by this truly American and modern view of matrimonial relations.

"Nothing easier than that," Mrs. Granger replied. "I really needn't account for it at all. As I've said, he always takes for granted that I have a good reason for whatever I do. But I shall tell him that you are related to an old friend of mine (which is quite true, for I have no older friends than the Harcourts); and that, since you have lately lost your parents, and are alone and in grief, I have persuaded you to accompany me on a visit to America, in order to divert your mind."

"That is all quite true, as far as it goes," Moira conceded. "Only——"

"You think it doesn't go far enough? That's where you are mistaken. He will be perfectly satisfied, and ask no troublesome questions either of me or of you. So now, this being settled, there remains for me only to say that I hope you understand that you are going to America as my guest."

"After I reach there, yes," Moira answered; "but not as far as the journey is concerned. Royall has left me well provided with the means for that, and he would never consent to my going otherwise."

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Mrs. Granger was not altogether pleased by this, but she knew when to yield.

"Being what he is, I suppose Royall wouldn't consent to your not paying for your own railway and steamer tickets," she said; "but kindly remember that everything else is my affair."

The next morning, therefore, saw the opening scene of the drama which these two confessedly romantic persons had arranged, when from the Gare du Nord their train steamed out of Paris, leaving Mrs. Royall Harcourt behind, and bearing a reincarnation of the Moira Fortescue who twenty-five years before had entered there in the charm of her Celtic youth and beauty. The dramatic spirit which she had possibly lacked rose like effervescent wine in her daughter, giving color to her cheek and a sparkling light to her wonderful dark-blue eyes, as Mrs. Granger noted with approval.

"You look a different creature from the girl I found yesterday," she cried. "The change is doing you good already, and I expect wonders from the experiences which are before you. Have you ever been to England before?"

"Only once, when I went to Ireland with my mother; and I was a small child then," Moira replied.

"Well, you'll enjoy London. It's at its very best at this season. But we shall be there only a few days, since our passage is engaged on the *Mauretania*, and good steamship accommodation is hard to get. London is simply overflowing with Americans just now."

"I hope that I shall not have to meet any of

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them," Moira remarked apprehensively. "I'm sure that Royall would not wish me to do so."

"Without reference to Royall—who doesn't deserve the consideration you are so anxious to pay to his wishes,—I don't intend you to meet any of them, if it can be avoided," Mrs. Granger replied. "Your mourning furnishes a good excuse for avoiding anything of the kind."

"It seems to me that it would be better if no excuse were required," Moira said. "What I mean," she added hastily, as Mrs. Granger looked at her in some surprise, "is that there is a class of persons, such as companions and governesses, who are never expected to enter the society of their employers. If you would let it be known that I am with you in a position of that kind——"

"My dear, you are distracted! Royall would never forgive us."

"Royall has left the details of this matter in your hands and in mine; and what I suggest would simplify things very much," Moira urged earnestly. "If I am with you as your companion and secretary, there would be no need of explanations or excuses about my not appearing socially, since no one would expect me to do so."

"It *would* simplify things, and avoid explanations," Mrs. Granger admitted; "but I repeat that Royall——"

"Let us leave Royall out of this," Moira interposed firmly. "What he is chiefly concerned about is that I shall not be recognized as his wife, and what I propose would lessen greatly the danger of anything of the kind. As your guest, people must see

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me occasionally, and they would look at me curiously,—all the more because you could not give any convincing explanation of who I am; but in the position of which I speak there would be no scrutiny and no curiosity, for nobody would notice me at all."

"I'm by no means ready to assent to that," Mrs. Granger said, looking at the brilliant face, the striking distinction of the whole personality. "You don't realize that it would be impossible for you ever to escape notice altogether; but I grant that what you propose would lessen this notice, and spare all necessity of explanation about you. So if you insist——"

"Oh, I do; and I shall be so grateful to you for consenting!"

"Then I'll introduce you to Robert as my companion and secretary; and if you want to carry the play further, if you wouldn't mind reading a little French with Leila to improve her accent——"

"Leila is your daughter?"

"My only daughter, just twelve years old."

"I shall be delighted to help her with her French accent, and anything else. Madame, dear Madame, how good you are!"

"I can only reply to that in a phrase which I have heard Robert use," Mrs. Granger declared, laughing. "In this case, most emphatically, 'the boot is on the other leg.' It is you who are good, and Leila who will profit by your goodness."

"At all events, we have settled matters delightfully!" Moira cried. "And now, indeed, I feel as if the stage were set and the play about to begin."

CHAPTER VI

MRS. GRANGER had been quite justified in saying that her husband was, as a rule, perfectly satisfied with whatever she did, and asked no troublesome questions about any of her actions; but she forgot to reckon upon the fact that all rules are subject to exceptions, and that it was likely he might exhibit some natural curiosity concerning the companion whom she so unexpectedly, and without warning, brought with her from Paris. He was too well-bred to show any very marked outward signs of his surprise when, on meeting his wife, the most striking-looking young creature he had ever seen was presented to him in a casual manner as "My friend, Miss Fortescue, who has been good enough to come with me as my companion and secretary." But the expression of his expanding eyes, and the glance he turned upon Mrs. Granger, prepared that lady for inquiries, which, however, she anticipated no difficulty in parrying.

But it was here that she found herself mistaken. It proved by no means easy to satisfy Mr. Granger's curiosity with the rather vague formula of explanation she had prepared.

"Who on earth is this stunning girl you've brought with you, Emily?" he inquired, as soon as they were alone together. "Where does she come from? And how did you pick her up?"

"I didn't 'pick her up' at all," Mrs. Granger re-

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plied, in a slightly rebuking tone. "I met her in the best social surroundings. She is a very charming person, and connected with old friends of mine."

"What old friends? I don't recall the name of Fortescue among our friends."

"My dear Robert, do you suppose that I have never had any friends except those who are yours also?"

The asperity with which the question was asked caused Mr. Granger to open his eyes again. It was so unlike Emily to be irritated in this manner.

"No, I don't suppose anything of the kind," he answered. "But I thought I was pretty well acquainted with at least the names of your friends. However—hem!—who *are* the Fortescues?"

"Very good people," Mrs. Granger responded loftily, in a phrase which is well understood to apply to social rather than to moral excellence. "You've only to look at Moira to see that. But it wasn't really the Fortescues who were the old friends of whom I spoke," she added hastily; "but some others with whom she is connected, and who—er—don't wish to recognize her at present."

Scenting a mystery—as indeed he would have been the most obtuse of men if he had not scented it,—curiosity flamed high in Mr. Granger.

"Not recognize a girl like that!" he exclaimed. "Why, what has she done?"

"She has done nothing," Mrs. Granger replied. "The difficulty of her position comes altogether through the fault of others."

"Whose fault? And who are the others?"

At this the lady turned upon her questioner with an air of exasperation.

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"I never knew you so inquisitive before!" she cried. "I really think that you might trust my judgment and discretion, especially in a matter like choosing a companion, which concerns myself alone."

"My dear Emily, you know that I always trust your judgment and discretion, and never interfere in your personal affairs," her husband hastened to say. "But I didn't imagine that there was any reason why I shouldn't ask a few questions when you spring such a surprise as this upon me. For you've always said you would never have a companion."

"One is at liberty to change one's mind, I suppose," the irritated lady replied. And then, being really a very sensible woman, and recognizing the right of her husband to make the inquiries she found so provoking, she suddenly changed her tone. "It's true that I've always said that I would never have a companion, and I don't really need one now," she confessed. "But Moira—that is, Miss Fortescue—was not willing to come with me as my guest without rendering some service in return; so we made this arrangement. I will tell you all that I can about her, since you are so curious——"

"Oh, not at all,—not at all!" Mr. Granger felt bound to demur, for the last words were distinctly reproachful. "You needn't tell me anything that you'd rather not tell."

"I'll tell you what I can," Mrs. Granger repeated. "It was through an old friend—whose name I would rather not mention—that I met her in Paris. Both her parents have lately died—that's why she is in deep mourning,—and she was left alone, in a very sad and unprotected position. But she is closely con-

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nected with people in America whom I know—I can't mention *their* names, either,—and who, I believe, will need only to see her to be convinced that she is—er—all that could be desired. So I asked her to go to America with me, in order to give them an opportunity to see her; and she finally agreed to do so, but begged to be allowed to go as my companion and secretary, to which I'm sure there can't be the least objection."

Mr. Granger's eyes had opened wider and wider during the course of this highly complicated and mysterious relation, and an expression of unusual gravity now settled on his genial, good-humored face.

"There's certainly not the least objection to your having a companion and secretary, if you want one," he replied; "but I must say that, in my opinion, there is an objection to mixing yourself up in other people's affairs, as you appear to be doing."

Mrs. Granger flushed angrily; for, being of an extremely decided character, and having been an independent heiress from her earliest youth, she had never, as it chanced, had to endure reproof except in the mildest form. But again good sense triumphed over annoyance, as she perceived that an attitude of disapproval on her husband's part would not only interfere with her comfort, but might (if it became apparent to Moira) also interfere seriously with the success of her plans.

"One is never safe from surprises," she remarked, in a tone which indicated her own very decided surprise. "The last thing I could have imagined possible was that you would doubt my discretion. Of course, if you can't trust me—can't believe that I

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know what I am about, and that I am not likely to mix myself up foolishly in other people's affairs,—I had better tell you the whole story, though I should prefer not to do so, on account of violating confidence."

This had the desired effect of putting Mr. Granger on his mettle.

"I have already assured you that I don't wish you to violate confidence in order to tell me anything," he said heroically, though conscious that his curiosity had rarely been more excited. "I expressed an opinion, in which I think you'll agree, that it is, generally speaking, undesirable to interfere in other people's affairs; but this doesn't mean that I haven't implicit confidence in your discretion,—for you know that I have."

"I thought I knew it," Mrs. Granger replied; "and I'm glad to be assured that I wasn't mistaken. Well, all I ask is that you will display your confidence in my discretion during the short time that Moira and I wish to maintain our little mystery, and believe that there wouldn't be any mystery at all if it were not to serve a good purpose."

"I'm rather doubtful of the wisdom of mysteries," Mr. Granger permitted himself to observe; "but, of course, I'm ready to give you all the confidence you want; and I hope that you and 'Myra'—is that her name?—will succeed in your purpose, whatever it may be."

Mrs. Granger opened her lips to correct the "Myra" which had fallen from his—and then closed them without doing so; for it suddenly occurred to her that this substitution for such an unusual name

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as Moira would add effectively to the disguise which the bearer of that name had assumed.

So a little later, as Moira stood before her dressing-table putting the last touches to a very simple dinner toilette, a quick tap at her door was followed almost immediately by the entrance of Mrs. Granger, with a narrow satin train following her like a snake.

"My dear," she cried, as Moira turned around, "do you mind if I call you Myra instead of your own lovely name, which *does* require a slightly difficult twist of the tongue to pronounce it properly?"

Moira looked surprised.

"Dear Madame," she answered, "you may call me what you please, if it is easier to you; but I assure you that you pronounce Moira perfectly, and I'm afraid I should hardly know myself as Myra."

"Oh, yes, you would! The names are so much alike that it's really hard to distinguish one from the other when spoken," Mrs. Granger replied. "I've just had a proof of that; for, although you say that I pronounce Moira perfectly, Robert thought that I called you Myra; and when he repeated the name, I didn't correct him."

"Why not?"

"Because it struck me, like a flash, that it was better for you to be known for the present as Myra to the few people who will hear your Christian name."

Moira still stared.

"I don't see why," she said.

"Then I'm afraid you're inclined to be stupid," Mrs. Granger remarked frankly. "Don't you see that the name might, when taken with other things, afford a clue to your identity as Moira Deschanel?"

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Now, don't say that you don't believe that anybody would be likely to put two and two together in that way; for I can tell you there's nothing more likely. I've just had a much more difficult task than I expected in evading Robert's inquiries about you—never, never again will I trust any man not to exhibit curiosity!—and I felt that it was fortunate that he misunderstood your name, and so gave me the suggestion to change it. I believe that if he heard you called Moira—and he's by no means very keen-witted, either—it would soon lead him to guess who you are."

"But if your husband is curious about me, why do you not tell him who I am?" the girl asked. "I should prefer you to do so."

Mrs. Granger shook her head in the most determined manner.

"It would never answer," she said. "He would suggest all kinds of doubts about the wisdom of what we are doing, and worry me constantly with scruples and advice. Now, I particularly dislike having advice offered me; for I have confidence in my own judgment, and I always know clearly what I intend to do. Therefore, I don't care to hear other people's opinions, not even Robert's, on a subject that I've made up my mind about. This is one reason why I don't wish to tell him who you are; and another is, as I've mentioned before, that he might betray the secret without intending to do so."

"I am really very much distressed——" Moira began.

But Mrs. Granger cut her short.

"You needn't be," she said. "With my manage-

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ment of my part of the affair you have nothing whatever to do. I've settled Robert; and, having given me a pledge of confidence, he is now on his honor not to make any more inquiries about you until I permit him to do so. Nevertheless, I think it will be safest for me to call you Myra instead of Moira—if you don't object."

"I don't object to your calling me anything you like," Moira said again. "But it seems—a little disingenuous, doesn't it?"

Mrs. Granger gave her a slightly ironical glance.

"In that case, how does 'Miss Fortescue' strike you?" she inquired.

"It strikes me as altogether different," Moira answered. "Fortescue is a name which I have a right to use. I always liked the Spanish custom of bearing the mother's as well as the father's family name. But my Christian name was bestowed on me in baptism, and is, therefore, not subject to change."

"I know dozens of people who are called by names other than their baptismal names," Mrs. Granger replied. "I've a friend who was baptized Elizabeth, and has been called from her infancy Dot by all her family and friends. But, of course, if you object to my calling you Myra, I won't do so. I can say Miss Fortescue——"

"No, no!" Moira interposed quickly. "I should be sorry if you did that. It would seem like putting me at a distance. Call me anything,—Myra, if you wish to do so."

"Myra, then, it shall be for the present," Mrs. Granger said, patting her arm caressingly. "It's not so pretty as your own name; but you'll hardly notice

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the difference. Come, then, let us go to dinner. The restaurant of this hotel is one of the most fashionable in London, and I'm glad you are looking so lovely and so Parisian. No wonder Robert called you a 'stunning girl.' "

But at this Moira drew back suddenly, looking very doubtful.

"I didn't think of our dining in a fashionable restaurant," she said. "Dear Madame, don't you see that here in London there might be many people who would recognize me as Moira Deschanel?"

Mrs. Granger's face fell almost ludicrously.

"Why, yes; of course, I see it," she answered, after a pause. "London is not like America. It's so very near Paris, and society is so cosmopolitan that among the class of people who come to this hotel there would almost certainly be some one who would recognize you; for you are far too distinguished in appearance to escape notice. What are we to do? What am I to tell Robert, who is waiting for us?"

"Tell him you have decided that it is better I should dine quietly with your little girl. Isn't that permissible?"

"It's permissible enough, but I don't like it."

"I like it extremely," Moira assured her. "I shall much prefer dining with her to going into that restaurant, where, in fear of recognition, I would be uncomfortable every moment."

"Very well," Mrs. Granger assented resignedly. "I suppose it *will* be best. And Leila will be delighted; though she's already had her dinner at luncheon-time, and her tea later, in the English fashion."

"I don't suppose she will object to another dinner,"

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Moira said, smiling; "and it will be a good opportunity for us to make acquaintance."

"That's true," Mrs. Granger agreed again. "I'll order dinner, then, served privately for you two. And now I must go and disappoint poor Robert, who is all aflame with curiosity about you; and who also, I'm sure, thought dinner would be a good opportunity to make your acquaintance."

"Tell him that he will have ample opportunity for that later," Moira laughed in reply.

As Mrs. Granger had predicted, Robert was disappointed; and Leila was delighted by the change of arrangement which she announced, when she found the two together; for they were exceedingly good friends and very fond of each other's society.

"Oh, *good!*" Leila cried, jumping down from the arm of the chair on which she had been perched, beside her father, and executing a *pas seul*. "I'm quite ready for another dinner, thank you, mummy! And I want to see how I'll like Miss Fortescue; for we've just been agreeing, dad and I, that she's as pretty as a peach."

"Leila!" her mother reproved. "You displease me very much with your fondness for slang, and you will certainly shock Miss Fortescue. French girls don't use slang phrases."

"Don't they?" Leila's surprise was apparently a little skeptical. "I'll ask Miss Fortescue about that, though I didn't know that she was a French girl. Is Fortescue a French name?"

"No, but she has French blood, and she was born and brought up in France, so she speaks the language

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in the most beautiful manner possible; and that's why I have asked her to speak French with you in order to improve your accent."

"Mummy!" Leila's exclamation was at once horrified and reproachful. "I didn't know you had laid a trap like that for me. So she's just a governess, and, of course, she'll spoil the pleasure of dinner by wanting to talk French all the time. I'd rather go to bed, if you don't mind."

While Mr. Granger, who was as lax in discipline as American fathers usually are, threw back his head and laughed, Mrs. Granger caught her daughter by the shoulder and gave her an admonitory shake.

"You will do exactly what I have arranged for you to do," she said. "Miss Fortescue is not a governess—though it would be wonderful good luck for you if she were,—and she has merely agreed to talk French with you occasionally, to oblige me. It is a chance such as you may never have again to learn the very best French accent; and if you have any sense at all you will appreciate and take advantage of it."

"But will she begin to-night?" Leila queried anxiously. "You see, I'd like to enjoy my dinner; and I can't if I have to be thinking of the irregular verbs,—and there are so many of them in French!"

"I don't think it likely that she will begin to-night," Mrs. Granger replied, joining in her husband's laughter. "If she does, just tell her that irregular verbs are apt to interfere with your appetite, and she will understand."

There was no need, however, for Leila to plead the distaste, shared by many French scholars, for the irregular verbs of that language. Miss Fortescue

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considerately maintained the conversation in English; and by her choice of topics, her charming sweetness, and dash of humor, completely fascinated the big-eyed and long-legged child, who appraised her with a child's shrewd intuition for what is sincere and lovable in character. By the time dinner was ended their friendship was established on a firm basis; and, as Leila had announced that her mother had given her permission to sit up later than usual, "to keep you company," they sat together by one of the open windows of the room, which overlooked the brilliantly lighted Embankment and the river beyond.

"London is beautiful!" Moira said, looking out on the myriad lights mirrored in the current of the dark stream, and feeling the soft enchantment of the summer night, the stir and animation of the great city's holiday crowds. "I did not expect to find it so beautiful."

"Have you never been here before?" the much-traveled young person beside her asked, in surprise. "I've been here often; we come over almost every year. London is nice enough, but it isn't beautiful like Paris. You'll find *that* out when you see it by daylight."

"Oh, there's no city so beautiful as Paris, I suppose!" the daughter of that siren city echoed, with a sigh.

"Not any that I've seen, and I've been almost everywhere," Leila stated, in the superior tone which extensive travel is apt to produce in even mature persons. "I always jump for joy when we go to Paris, and I was dreadfully disappointed that mummy wouldn't take me with her when she went there last

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week. She said she couldn't be bothered with me, but I shouldn't have bothered her at all; for I like to go to Paquin's and Doucet's and all the rest of them, and see the beautiful dresses and the lovely ladies."

"But you've liked London this year, haven't you?" Moira asked, with amusement at such youthful sophistication.

"Yes, London's been awfully interesting this year," said Leila. "The Coronation was splendid. We had a very fine place to see the procession, and I was able to get a good look at Princess Mary. I was more interested in her than in anybody else. She's very pretty, and looks as if she would be pleasant to know. It's a pity one can't know her, isn't it?"

"You might find her very much like other people if you did know her," Moira said consolingly. "A fairy-tale princess had best remain in the fairy tale."

"She was like a fairy-tale princess in her golden coach," Leila said, with eyes shining over the reminiscence. "It was like a fairy tale come true just to see her; and I wished—oh, I *did* wish!—that I were a princess, too."

"My little girl, we can't all be princesses," Moira reminded her. "Remember that Princess Mary isn't riding in a golden coach all the time; and that, in consequence of her rank, she is bound in a hundred ways that you are not."

"That's what mummy said," Leila remarked. "But, all the same, I'd like it. However, there's no use wishing for what's impossible; and I can't fancy dad a king, though I think mummy would make a very good queen."

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"I think so, too," Moira agreed, laughing a little.

"*You'd make a lovely princess!*" was Leila's next rather startling remark, as she stared at the figure beside her with eyes that still held a vision of Coronation splendors. "I always try to fancy now how people would look in a royal procession; but I don't find many that, it seems to me, would look as if they belonged there; but *you* would."

"You are very flattering," Moira murmured, with a sudden tightening of the throat, as she remembered how she had heard again and again that in "*La Princesse Lointaine*" she looked, indeed, as if she "*belonged there.*" A passionate longing for the life she had given up, for the part she had made her own in a manner possible only to a true artist, and into which she had merged, as it were, all the rich charm of her personality, rushed over her, and for a moment she saw the brilliant scene before her through a mist of tears. Then she gathered herself together, and turned to the chattering child with a slightly tremulous smile.

"Since you are fond of princesses," she said, "and since your mother wants you to hear some very good French, how would you like for me to read to you some day a beautiful French drama called '*La Princesse Lointaine*'? You can translate that, can't you?"

"Oh, yes! '*The Princess Far-Away,*'" Leila replied quickly. "I'd like that immensely. I love to be read to, and I have no difficulty in understanding French, but" (with hasty recollection) "I don't like to speak it on account of the irregular verbs, you know."

"I suppose they are troublesome sometimes,"

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Moira said, with ready sympathy. "But the only way to become acquainted with them is to use them. I'll help you, if you wish. We can agree to speak French instead of English when we are together. How would that do?"

"I'd really rather speak English," Leila answered, with a sigh; "but mummy says you have a beautiful accent, and that I ought to improve mine; and if you don't think that just hearing you read would be enough——"

"I don't think so. If you want to improve your accent, you must speak."

"Well" (with another sigh), "we'll try it, then; but I do like to talk, and my ideas don't flow freely in a foreign language."

"Nobody's ideas do," Moira told her; "but you'll soon forget that it is a foreign language, and then they will flow as freely as in English. *Maintenant, parlons Français!*"

Then she began herself to speak in that language, and soon even the child beside her was fascinated by her exquisite intonations, by the purity and beauty of such French as she had never heard before. Involuntarily she cried presently:

"Mademoiselle, listening to you is like hearing music."

But Mademoiselle shook her head in admonition.

"*Parles-vous Français, ma chère,*" she said.

Leila laughingly obeyed, and for the first time in her experience found pleasure in using the language of which she had a fair knowledge, and trying to imitate the accent of the companion who spoke it so charmingly.

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So Mrs. Granger found them when she suddenly entered the room,—conveying a sense of haste and excitement by her very movement—and interrupted the conversation.

"O mummy, we've been having the loveliest time!" Leila cried, springing up and rushing toward her. "Miss Fortescue speaks French like an angel, and I don't mind talking with her one bit."

"That's a marvell!" Mrs. Granger commented. "I wonder if Miss Fortescue realizes what a miracle she has wrought. But it's time for you to go to bed. Say good-night, and run away."

Leila looked at her keenly.

"You've got something interesting to talk about," she announced. "Mayn't I stay a little longer?"

"You may not," her mother answered, in a tone which admitted of no further questioning. "Go at once!"

Typical American child as she was, Leila knew—at least as far as her mother was concerned—the point where obedience was demanded; and, without more demur, she said good-night and went reluctantly away.

The door was hardly closed upon her when Mrs. Granger turned to Moira with the same air of haste and excitement that had marked her entrance.

"My dear," she said, "I've hurried up to give you a warning, so that you can go to your own room if you prefer to do so; and I think you will prefer it. At all events, I felt bound to prepare you; for Robert is about to bring here a man whom you certainly would not like to meet unprepared. I left them smok-

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ing over their coffee, but they will be up in a few minutes."

Moira, who had risen, looked at her in amazement.

"Who is the man?" she inquired. "Do I know him?"

"No, you don't know him," Mrs. Granger answered; "but you know *of* him. He is Royall's cousin, Paul Lyndon."

CHAPTER VII

IT HAD been with something like a shock of surprise that, startled by her husband's exclamation—"Why, there's Paul Lyndon!"—Mrs. Granger had glanced across the brilliant dining-room where they were seated, and seen the well-known face of Royall Harcourt's cousin.

"Good heavens!" she ejaculated. "What on earth has brought *him* here?"

"Pretty much what has brought the rest of us, I suppose," Mr. Granger replied. "Why shouldn't he be here? But if he came for the Coronation, I wonder we haven't met before. Ah! he sees us, and is coming over to speak!"

Lyndon had, in fact, caught sight of the familiar faces of his old friends, and, rising from the table where he was dining with two or three other men, came across the room to shake hands with them.

"I'm delighted to meet you both so soon," he said. "I heard that you were in London, and meant to look you up to-morrow."

"What do you mean by 'so soon'?" Mrs. Granger inquired. "We've been here for a month, or more."

"But I haven't," Lyndon replied. "I arrived only yesterday."

"So you didn't come for the Coronation?"

"Not at all. I've come on business, which will keep me in London for a few days. Then I'm going to Paris."

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"Naturally,—that's the Mecca of all good Americans."

"It is not mine," Lyndon said a little dryly; "but I've a particular reason for going there at present. I'll tell you about it if I may join you after dinner.—that is, if you've no engagement?"

"We have none at all, and shall be very glad for you to join us," Mrs. Granger assured him. "We are staying in this hotel, and can go up to our own sitting-room to talk quietly." Then, on an impulse, she added: "I myself have just come from Paris to-day."

There was a significance in her tone which made Lyndon glance at her quickly; but he did not make the inquiry that for a moment seemed trembling on his tongue. Instead, remarking only, "I'll have the pleasure of joining you, then, presently," he turned and went back to his companions.

"An odd fellow!" Mr. Granger commented, looking after him. "Who else would come over to London in this year and at this season, and time his arrival after the great attraction, that drew all the rest of the world, was over!"

"But he says he has come on business," Mrs. Granger remarked; "and I hardly think he would have cared for the Coronation. He is an odd fellow, but I like him,—I've always liked him."

"Oh, so do I!" her husband assented, in the unenthusiastic tone with which Lyndon was generally commended. "He's extremely clever and hard-working; and he'll arrive wherever he wants to go, there's not a doubt of that. But 'all work and no play makes Jack

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a dull boy'; and it's a pity he doesn't know how to play sometimes."

"He knew how to play as well as any one when he was younger," Mrs. Granger said; "but he was always tremendously ambitious, which is the reason he is so absorbed in his professional work now."

"I wonder what has brought him over?" Mr. Granger observed meditatively. "It strikes me that business is probably only a cloak for family affairs. I've forgotten to tell you, my dear—or rather, I haven't had time to do so—that I heard while you were away a sad piece of news about young Harcourt. It seems that he has married some chorus-girl, or worse, in Paris——"

"He has done nothing of the kind!" Mrs. Granger interrupted impetuously. "I met Royall Harcourt when I was in Paris, and heard all about his marriage from himself. Moreover, I met the girl he married, and she is charming."

"But she was on the stage——"

"Yes, but not as a chorus-girl or anything of the kind. She made her *début* as an actress in one of Rostand's beautiful plays, and achieved such a success that Paris was raving over her, when Royall fell desperately in love with her, and persuaded her to marry him off-hand."

Mr. Granger regarded the speaker with surprise.

"You appear to know all about it," he said.

"But, nevertheless, it must have been a very undesirable marriage; for I understand that Governor Harcourt is furious, and has renounced Royall in the approved fashion of outraged fathers."

"Royall has acted very badly toward his father,

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as well as very foolishly," Mrs. Granger admitted. "I told him so, but, of course, it did no good. He's a true Harcourt in his pride and obstinacy, whether the Governor believes it or not. Like you," she added, "I've little doubt that Paul Lyndon has come over to see his cousin and try to smooth matters; but, unfortunately, he arrives too late."

"Why too late?"

"Because Royall has gone to Morocco."

"To Morocco! Why has he gone there?"

"He has gone as illustrating artist with a distinguished French writer; and he is to be paid enough for his sketches to make him, for the present at least, independent of his father."

Mr. Granger whistled softly.

"I wouldn't have believed it!" he said. "He must have genuine talent, after all, as well as pluck. But what has he done with the actress whom he married? Is she going to continue acting?"

"If she were, there would have been no need for Royall to go to Morocco," Mrs. Granger answered. "No; he's a true Harcourt in that respect also. He won't allow his wife to remain on the stage."

"Then what has he done with her?"

"There was no need for him to do anything except say good-by. Paris is her home; she has always lived there."

"Then he just left her behind?"

"Yes, he left her behind; there was nothing else to be done."

"Pretty hard lines for him, if he was so desperately in love,—and in the honeymoon, too!"

"It *was* hard lines," said Mrs. Granger. "You'd

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have thought so if you had seen him the day he went away. Poor fellow! His face haunts me yet."

"Oh, you saw him just before he left?"

"He stopped on his way to the railway station to say good-by."

Mr. Granger looked curiously at his wife, but he asked no more questions; and silence followed for a few minutes, during which he applied himself to his dinner; while Mrs. Granger, glancing now and then at him, wondered if he were engaged in that mental process known as putting two and two together,—in other words, if he suspected a connection between Royall Harcourt's departure for Morocco and her own arrival with a beautiful and mysterious companion.

If Mr. Granger was shrewd enough to suspect this connection, however, he was also discreet enough to say nothing about it; and when he presently spoke again it was on an altogether different subject. But, though relieved to be spared the necessity of evading awkward inquiries, Mrs. Granger was able to give only a very divided attention to his remarks; for her mind was busy with conjectures about the meaning of Paul Lyndon's unexpected appearance. It seemed altogether probable that he had come on an errand of reconciliation; and if this were the case—if Governor Harcourt had authorized him to convey even a partial forgiveness to his son,—then there would be no longer need for Moira's masquerading as Miss Fortescue. She could be presented to Lyndon as his cousin's wife, and everything would at once and most beautifully arrange itself. Mrs. Granger's spirit—that "managing" spirit of which Royall had

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spoken, and which was so strong in her—rose with elation as she thought how entirely the situation was under her control and its details in her capable hands.

"Only I must give Moira warning!" she reflected; and then remarked aloud, breaking in irrelevantly on what Mr. Granger was saying: "I hope Paul will tell us frankly what he is going to do."

"You'd better not count on his telling you much," her husband warned her. "He's a very reserved fellow, you know."

"I don't believe he'll be reserved with me," she answered. "You see, I've known them so well all my life."

She proved to be right in her opinion; for Lyndon, laying aside his habitual reserve, began to speak of the matter which really had brought him abroad almost as soon as he joined Mr. Granger and herself in the palm court, where they had gone for their coffee and liqueurs.

"I suppose," he said abruptly, "that you've both heard of Royall's marriage?"

Mr. Granger nodded.

"Heard of it a few days ago," he answered sympathetically. "The news came from Baltimore. It's too bad of Royall; though I don't think any one is surprised at his doing such a thing. But everybody's immensely sorry for the Governor."

"Everybody well may be," Lyndon said. "It's a terrible blow to him,—almost the worst possible. I don't know when or how he will recover from it. And my mother is equally distressed. In fact, I found both of them in such a sad state when I went down

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to the Manor that I made up my mind that something must be done."

"What kind of something?" asked Mrs. Granger.

The young man looked at her with a frown of apparent perplexity.

"That was what was hard to tell," he answered. "It seemed rather hopeless, because my uncle is positively determined that he will never recognize the—er—actress whom Roy has married."

"Oh! He is determined upon that?"

"Absolutely. And it is impossible to blame him when one considers what she probably is."

This was so different from what she had been dreaming of that for a moment Mrs. Granger found herself incapable of speech; and while she sat silently gazing at him Lyndon went on:

"I felt almost desperate when I left the Manor; but I soon perceived that the only thing to do—the only thing that held any promise in it—was for me to come and see Royall myself, find out what kind of woman he has married, and learn if there is any hope of buying her off or inducing him to leave her."

"Paul Lyndon, I am ashamed of you!" Mrs. Granger exclaimed, with a vehemence that startled both her companions. "How dare you talk of 'buying off' a woman from her husband, or trying to induce him to leave her?"

Lyndon stared at the indignant countenance which confronted him.

"My dear Mrs. Granger," he said, "you don't understand the situation. This woman is most likely an adventuress, and will probably be willing enough to be bought off. And if Royall hasn't come to his

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senses yet—it's perhaps too soon to expect that,—he will in time, no doubt; and it's well to let him know in what way the door of return will be open to him."

"In other words, the door of return will be open if he abandons his wife! I couldn't—I really *couldn't*—have believed it possible that such a suggestion would come from Governor Harcourt, or from you."

"It doesn't come from my uncle," Lyndon assured her. "He makes no suggestions at all, but simply accepts the fact that he has lost his son. It is I who am not willing to accept that fact, and who, on my own initiative altogether, wish to pave the way for Royall's return to his proper place at home."

"And can you think of no better way than that he should abandon the woman he has married?"

"It is the only way," Lyndon said simply. "You could move the rock of Gibraltar as soon as you could change my uncle's determination never to acknowledge or receive that woman."

"But she is his *wife*!"

"There are divorce courts to change that," the young lawyer said.

"And how about 'whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder'?" Mrs. Granger demanded. "Oh, yes, I know that is out of date, and contemptuously disregarded in most parts of America now! But I thought it still held force with the old families of the Land of Sanctuary."

"You know that it does," replied Lyndon; "but there are situations which justify the annulment of marriage, and it appears to me that this is one of them."

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"And you've come to that decision without knowing anything really about what the situation is," Mrs. Granger told him. "Well, now listen to me; for I *do* know something about it. I met Royall when I was in Paris the other day, and I can tell you, in the first place, that it would be quite as easy to move the rock of Gibraltar as to induce him to consider leaving his wife; and, in the second place, that he would be a fool as well as a craven if he *did* consider it; for she is one of the most charming women I have ever seen,—and you'll admit, I suppose, that I know something about what a woman should be."

"There's no one whose judgment I would sooner trust on that point," Lyndon told her, with the utmost sincerity, though his eyes expanded in a fashion which was rapidly becoming very familiar to Mrs. Granger. "I fancied that you might have met Royall when you first spoke of having been in Paris," he went on, "and I hoped to obtain some light on his state of mind that might help me in approaching him; but I didn't think of your meeting the woman he has married, and I couldn't have imagined your entertaining such an opinion of her."

"Why not?" (The interrogation bristled with challenge.) "What do you know of her?"

"Well, only the facts of her antecedents. You'll admit that, however charming she may appear, a French actress is not a fitting wife for Royall Harcourt."

"I'd admit it readily enough if Royall Harcourt were, like his forbears, of a rather narrow, provincial type," Mrs. Granger replied uncompromisingly. "But, you see, he isn't. He's artistic in his tastes,

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cosmopolitan in his sympathies, and altogether what gardeners call a 'sport'—that is, a new variety—on the Harcourt family tree; and nobody knows this better than his father."

"There's no doubt of that," Lyndon admitted; "but I don't see that it affords any excuse for his conduct toward his father."

"Not for his conduct toward his father—and I've told him so,—but it *does* explain, if not excuse, his marriage."

The young man shrugged his shoulders in a manner which made Mrs. Granger want to box his ears, it was so expressive of slightly contemptuous incredulity.

"I perceive that I am speaking to Royall's champion," he said, "rather than to a friend who would help me to bring him back where he belongs; for it's all very well to talk of artistic tastes and cosmopolitan sympathies, but duties come before either, and Royall has duties at home."

"Not duties that demand his leaving his wife; for a man must, if necessary, leave father and mother in order to cleave to his wife, you know."

"My dear Emily," Mr. Granger suggested at this point, "your knowledge of Scripture is quite edifying, but I'm afraid you are not helping Lyndon very much in the difficult matter he has in hand."

"I'm trying to help him to see the matter as it really is, and not as he imagines it to be," Mrs. Granger replied. "He ought to be grateful to me for that, but he evidently isn't."

"Oh, yes, I am!" Lyndon assured her. "But I confess I'm extremely astonished also. I couldn't

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have imagined your taking such a view of what Royall has done."

"That's because you don't understand, except in the most general way, what he *has* done," she returned.

"Are you quite sure that *you* understand?" Lyndon inquired. "About the woman whom he has married now,—you've taken her at her surface value; and, of course, she must be attractive, or Royall would not have acted as madly as he has in marrying her. But you must be aware that the most attractive women are often the least estimable."

"And I remind you that I am old enough and experienced enough to tell when a woman is estimable, and I'd stake my faith on this woman."

Lyndon looked down at his coffee-cup for a moment. Then he said slowly:

"No doubt I'll be able to judge the situation better when I see Royall. It's possible I shall go over to Paris to-morrow."

Mrs. Granger started at this announcement; for in the heat of discussion she had lost sight of Lyndon's intention of going to see his cousin.

"I'm sorry," she said—"and yet, perhaps, it's as well,—that you won't find Royall in Paris if you go."

"No?" The young man looked at her with renewed surprise. "But I thought I understood that you had just seen him there."

"So I did, but he was on the point of leaving; and did leave yesterday, for Morocco."

"For Morocco!" Lyndon echoed, as Mr. Granger had done a little earlier. "What on earth has taken him there?"

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"A reason that takes men into many dangerous and inaccessible places," Mrs. Granger answered. "Because he is to be well paid for going; and it was necessary for him to make money, since his father, as you probably know, has cut off his supplies."

"I beg your pardon,"—for the first time Lyndon's manner was a trifle stiff,—"but his father has, on the contrary, notified Royall that the allowance he has had ever since he went abroad will be continued; but he has declined to increase it, on account of a marriage he refuses to acknowledge."

"It amounts to the same thing," Mrs. Granger said, with what her companion felt to be truly feminine logic. "Of course, what was sufficient for one isn't sufficient for two; and, besides, Royall very naturally incurred some debts at the time of his marriage. He could hardly be blamed for that, since he is the only son of a rich man."

"It would, however, have been slightly—deferential, let us say, to the rich man in question, if he had notified him of his intentions, matrimonial and otherwise," Lyndon remarked, more sarcastically than his hearer liked.

"I'm not defending Royall's conduct to his father," Mrs. Granger replied in a tone of asperity; "but neither do I think that his father's conduct toward him is to be defended. In my opinion, they are both wrong, and equally proud and obstinate. Royall is enraged at the things his father has written of his wife; and, rather than explain, or ask again for the means to live, which have been refused him, he has gone on a dangerous expedition into a

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country where war is in progress; and if he never returns, his father will have himself to thank."

"I don't agree with you," Lyndon said. "I don't think his father can be held accountable for any result that may occur from Royall's rashness. But this is grave news, and the first thing to do is to make him hear reason and come back. Can you tell me where I can reach him with a dispatch?"

Mrs. Granger shook her head.

"I can't," she answered; "and, moreover, I'm perfectly certain that it would be useless to send anything of the kind. He won't come back. And what inducement have you to offer him to do so? Can you promise him reconciliation with his father?"

"No," Lyndon admitted. "I have no authority to promise that. My uncle does not even know, though he may suspect, why I am over here; and I am sure he would disavow any promise of reconciliation that I made, unless Roy, on his part, agreed to leave his wife."

"Then you may spare yourself the trouble of sending any dispatches to Royall Harcourt," Mrs. Granger told him emphatically. "By mentioning such a condition you would only make the breach much wider between himself and his father. And as to paying any heed to your recommendations or requests, do you think *that* is likely when he was deaf to the pleadings of his wife, and to my earnest advice?"

"I'm afraid it isn't," Lyndon admitted again; "but what am I to do? I can't go back home without trying to reach him in some way."

Mr. Granger, who up to this point had been

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ignored by the two absorbed canvassers of the *affaire* Harcourt, now broke into the conversation again.

"Since you can't see Royall, at least at present," he said to Lyndon, "why not try the next best thing, and make an effort to see his wife? You can satisfy yourself then whether your or Emily's opinion of her is correct. She is to be found in Paris,—you said so, didn't you, my dear?"

The lady at whom he looked met his eyes with an expression in her own which conveyed a strong intimation of her opinion of the exasperating nature of masculine interference.

"I said that Royall left her in Paris," she answered in a very distinct and somewhat reserved tone; "but I didn't say that she remained there. In point of fact, I'm quite certain that she did not do so."

"But she can't have gone very far away in such a limited time," Mr. Granger went on; "and I suppose Lyndon could easily find her."

"My dear Robert!" (the rebuke of the tone was now marked), "Paul has not expressed any desire to find her; and I am not at all sure that she would wish to be found by any one who thinks of her as he does."

"But how is he to think differently unless he sees——"

"Really, Robert, you must let me say that I think we are both offering Paul too much advice, especially since he doesn't seem disposed to accept any of it."

"He hasn't had a chance, so far as mine is con-

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cerned," said Mr. Granger. "You've been offering him advice for half an hour, but this is the first I've offered."

"And it strikes me as very good advice," Lyndon interposed. "Since I can't see Royall at the present time, the next best thing will be to see the woman who has made all the mischief, and find out what it may be possible to do with her."

"Will you kindly tell me what you mean by that expression?" Mrs. Granger inquired, with a calmness which was plainly of the surface only.

"I mean," the young man answered, "that if she is of the type of woman I imagine her to be, she can probably be bought off,—especially if she is made to understand that there is nothing to be hoped for from Royall's father so long as she retains her hold on him."

Mrs. Granger gasped for a moment, and then, with the same outward calm, which was belied by the fires of inward indignation in her glance—

"Paul Lyndon," she said, "I told you several minutes ago that I was ashamed of you. I renew that statement; and I may add that I am also disappointed in, and disgusted with, you——"

"My dear!" Mr. Granger remonstrated in a low tone.

"Don't interrupt me, Robert!" (The fire flashed out vividly now.) "I shall certainly tell him what I think of him. For I'm sure that what you've just expressed is your idea, and yours alone," she added, turning upon Lyndon. "Governor Harcourt may be furiously angry with his son; but I know him too well to believe that he would ever think of trying to bribe

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a woman to leave her husband. Why, there could hardly be a deadlier insult offered to her!"

"You are quite right in believing that the idea is mine alone," Lyndon answered quietly. "I'm sorry that you think so badly of it and of me; but, you see, my experience in such matters is greater than yours, and I know that arrangements of the kind are often made."

"Perhaps, when the woman in question is merely an adventuress——"

"Frankly, that is what I believe this woman to be."

"And you have no respect for my opinion, or confidence in my judgment, when I tell you that she is as far removed from that class of woman as—as I am?"

"My dear Mrs. Granger, I have, generally speaking, the greatest respect for your opinion, and confidence in your judgment," the young man told her; "but in this matter I'm afraid you are hardly qualified to judge, since your knowledge of such women must be very limited."

"In other words, you think that you know more about her than I, who have seen her?"

"At least I think that I should like to apply my own judgment to the case; and, therefore, I'll see her, if you will give me her address."

"If I had her address, nothing would induce me to give it to you, since you wish to use it for such a purpose," Mrs. Granger declared. "But, as a matter of fact, she left Paris as soon as Royall did, and her present address is—er—unknown."

"But no doubt some one in Paris will be able to

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tell me where she is to be found. Can you give me the names of any of her friends or associates?"

"I *cannot*," replied Mrs. Granger, with an emphasis which was not to be mistaken. "And you will waste your time if you go to Paris looking for her, since I know that she went away without leaving any address behind."

It was his disappointment, perhaps, which made Lyndon say a little bitterly:

"And yet you declare that she is not an adventuress! If she were such a woman as you believe her to be, why should she conceal her place of residence?"

"Perhaps because she anticipated that, in Royall's absence, his family might approach her with some such proposal as you are ready to make," Mrs. Granger cuttingly replied. And then, catching her husband's expression of face, "I think," she added, "that we had better drop the subject. There's evidently nothing to be gained by discussing it. Now I am going upstairs" (she rose as she spoke). "Robert, bring Paul up when you've finished smoking, and by that time I may have recovered my temper."

CHAPTER VIII

MOIRA stood for a moment motionless, gazing wide-eyed at Mrs. Granger, after she heard that the man who was coming up was her husband's cousin, Paul Lyndon. Then—

"What had I better do?" she asked. "Would it not be well if I remained here and met him—as Royall's wife?"

"No!" Mrs. Granger cried, with a vehemence which startled her. "Let us go to your own room, and I will tell you why you must not think of such a thing."

Seizing the girl by the arm, she swept her away—out of one apartment and into another—as if by the force of a hurricane; and it was only after they were safe behind a closed door that she resumed her usual manner.

"No doubt I've astonished you," she said, as she sank breathlessly into a chair; "but I've been so astonished myself that I seem to have lost all my bearings. Never again will I think that I know any man until I have seen him tested. But I couldn't have believed that Paul Lyndon was what he has proved himself to be!"

"What has he proved himself?" Moira inquired.

"He has proved himself capable of advising and doing things which I regard as absolutely base," Mrs. Granger replied. "The revelation has amazed me; for I have always had a very high opinion of him, and liked him a great deal better than most peo-

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ple do. But I don't think I shall ever like him again," she ended, with a shake of her head which expressed the strongest possible disapproval.

"Why not?" Moira asked. "Is it something he has done or said about Royall which has shocked you so much?"

"Yes, about Royall, and also about you," Mrs. Granger answered. "My dear, I hate to tell you; but it is better that you should know on what errand he has come, since you have suggested revealing yourself to him as Royall's wife."

"It seems the most straightforward thing to do," Moira said simply. "And I think it is what Royall would wish me to do."

"Royall would never wish you to lay yourself open to be insulted," the older woman cried hotly. "And that is what would follow if you let Paul Lyndon know who you are."

"Insulted!" the girl echoed. Then she leaned forward, her face pale, but her eyes shining. "Please tell me exactly what you mean," she said.

"It's a hateful thing to tell you," Mrs. Granger repeated; "but unless you know what proposal he intends to make you can't understand why I am so averse to your revealing yourself to him. Well" (she drew a deep breath), "he has come to propose to Royall that he shall leave you; and to *you* he means to offer money, in some large sum, as a remuneration for allowing him to go without making trouble. This sounds horribly brutal, I know; but it is, in plain words, the reason for his being here."

"But I don't understand," Moira said. "Does he not know that we are married?"

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"Of course, he knows. How could he fail to know when Royall has announced the fact?"

"Then what does he mean by proposing that Royall shall leave me, and that I shall accept a bribe to let him go, as if—as if I were——"

"He means," Mrs. Granger broke in, "something which is very common in America, I'm sorry to say, and of which, no doubt, you have heard even in France: he means divorce."

"Divorce!" Moira seemed able only to echo these astonishing statements. "But, again, I don't understand. To a Catholic, of course, there is no such thing as divorce; but even in the case of others there must be some cause for it, and what cause is there between Royall and me?"

"You don't know to what a pass things have come in America," Mrs. Granger told her. "To secure a legal divorce in certain States there is no longer any need for cause; the flimsiest excuse will do,—as, for instance, nominal desertion. It is possible by such means to discard a wife or husband as easily as you would change a partner in a game."

"And this cousin comes to propose that Royall shall by such means discard me?"

"Exactly. And I can only say that it is a very good thing that he is at present unable to meet Royall; for I don't know how far Royall's indignation might carry him. I'm sure only that such a proposal would make the breach between himself and his family beyond healing."

"I am sure of it also," Moira agreed; "and, therefore, it is perhaps a good thing that he has gone to Morocco, and is out of reach. But I think that

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I should meet this man, and answer the proposal he comes to make to me."

"My dear, if you have any respect for my opinion, you will not entertain the idea for a moment," Mrs. Granger cried earnestly. "I would never forgive myself, and Royall would never forgive me, if I allowed you to be subjected to such a proposal while you are under my care. No; we must go on as we have begun. I am simply furious with Paul Lyndon, and I have told him that he cannot find you; that you left Paris immediately after Royall's departure, and that no one there has your address. That is true, isn't it? You didn't leave any address by which you could be traced, did you?"

"None at all," Moira answered. "There was no reason why I should do so. And since I am here with you, and you know these people—Royall's people—better than I, who, indeed, do not know them at all, I will be guided by your judgment. But, left to my own judgment" (she lifted her head proudly), "I should meet this man at once as Royall's wife."

"He doesn't deserve that you should do so," Mrs. Granger said. "If he had come with a different purpose—to see for himself what you were really like, in order to tell Governor Harcourt, who believes in him as in no one else in the world,—I would urge you to reveal yourself to him immediately; and I confess that I thought of something of the kind as soon as I saw him. But when I heard him talk, when I recognized how immovable was the prejudice in his mind, and when I learned the atrocious object he had in view, I knew that you could not think of

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meeting him, since it would only be to subject yourself to insult."

"I feel," Moira said quietly, but with a flash in her eyes, "that I should like to answer that insult."

Mrs. Granger regarded her for a moment, struck as she had never been struck before by the beauty which vivid feeling accentuated. Then she said:

"I know that you would like to answer it; but wait a little, and your answer will be more effective. Preserve your *incognita*; let Paul Lyndon see and recognize what you are; and, when he has fully recognized this, you can answer him, and I shall not counsel you to spare him."

"Then you do, after all, wish me to meet him?" Moira queried.

"For what other reason are you going to America than to meet Royall's relatives, and let them learn what you are, before you reveal yourself?" Mrs. Granger questioned in turn. "And, if opportunity offers, isn't London as good a place as any other for the meeting? I didn't wish you to meet Paul Lyndon unprepared, nor in ignorance of what his object in coming over here really is; but since you know this object, and are prepared, I see no reason why you should avoid meeting him—as Miss Fortescue."

"Do you advise me to meet him to-night?"

"I think not. I'm afraid we are neither of us calm enough to bear ourselves on the occasion as we would wish to do. Let the meeting be brought about by chance; and if meanwhile he goes to Paris to look for you, why I, for one, will not have any compassion for him in his wild-goose chase."

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Notwithstanding this positive assertion, however, Mrs. Granger was not able to refrain from feeling a little compassion for Paul Lyndon when she heard the next day that he had, indeed, gone to Paris to look for the person who had been so near him in London. For a moment her conscience suffered what might be described as a twinge; but the necessity of presenting an unmoved front to Mr. Granger, in whose tone, when he announced Paul Lyndon's departure, she fancied a shade of something like suspicion, enabled her to put self-reproach aside.

"I can't say that I am sorry for the disappointment that awaits him," she remarked calmly. "I told him distinctly that he would not find Royall's wife in Paris; and, since he doesn't choose to believe me, let him discover for himself whether or not I am right."

"I don't think he doubted your being right," Mr. Granger said,—“that is, he accepted your statement that Mrs. Royall Harcourt, as I suppose one must call her——”

"I don't see how you could possibly call her anything else," his wife flashed out.

"Well—er—no," he responded, in a tone which again she did not altogether fancy. "Of course, that is her proper name. But, although he believed that you probably knew what you were talking about when you said she had left Paris, Lyndon thought it would be well to go there, in the hope of tracing her present place of abode. And, being the keen fellow he is, I believe that he'll succeed in finding her."

"I am quite sure that he will not," Mrs. Granger stated, in her most positive manner. "As I also told

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him, she left no address behind when she went away from Paris."

"That is what Lyndon finds difficulty in believing," Mr. Granger replied. "He has no doubt that you think it is so; but he argues that a woman who has lived a professional life of the kind that hers has probably been will certainly have friends and associates who will know where she is, and who may be induced to part with the information."

"I hope," said Mrs. Granger, with a restrained wrath which was rather terrible, "that Paul Lyndon will not only be disappointed at present—of *that* I am certain,—but that he will have to suffer in the future for his abominable ideas. I have never been so disgusted and indignant with any one in all my life."

"I don't think that you are quite reasonable in the matter," Mr. Granger ventured to suggest. "You forget how different your and Lyndon's points of view are. You have seen the young woman, and taken up her cause with an enthusiasm to which you are sometimes liable——"

"I am the most unenthusiastic of human beings," Mrs. Granger announced; "or, perhaps, I should rather say," she added, as she caught her husband's amused glance, "that I am never enthusiastic without good cause. You dare not deny that."

Mr. Granger indicated that he did not dare to deny it.

"Well, then," the lady went on, "you, at least, should have confidence enough in my judgment to believe that I am not misled by enthusiasm in my opinion of Royall Harcourt's wife."

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"I *do* believe it," Mr. Granger assured her, with evident sincerity. "But you didn't let me finish what I began to say. It was, briefly, that you are Mrs. Harcourt's champion, because you have seen and—er—been very much attracted by her; while Lyndon has not seen her, and his opinion is what might naturally be expected from a member of Royall's family; and is also what your own would probably have been if you had only heard of the marriage, and had not chanced to meet the parties concerned when you were in Paris."

Mrs. Granger was reasonable enough to admit that had the meeting spoken of not occurred, her opinion would probably have been very different; but she added that under no circumstances could she have approved or endorsed Paul Lyndon's conduct.

"It's the point of view," her husband repeated. "He is thinking of the people at home—of the terrible blow this marriage has been to the poor Governor and to his mother,—and he wants to set things right if he can."

"I understand his point of view perfectly," Mrs. Granger returned. "It really doesn't require any interpretation. But what I couldn't have imagined possible is that he would be so far misled by family feeling, and sympathy for his uncle and mother, as to propose to 'set things right' by setting them wrong in the most shameful manner,—by counselling a man to forsake his wife, and insulting a woman by an offer of which I haven't patience to speak."

"You ought to try to realize that he doesn't think of the woman in question as you do——"

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"He thinks, I suppose—or at least he should think,—of such basic things as honor and justice, not to speak of the laws of God, as every right-minded person does," Mrs. Granger interrupted. "Don't attempt to excuse him any further, Robert; for I shall certainly lose my temper if you do."

"And that would be so unfortunate," Mr. Granger rather hastily remarked, "that we'll drop the subject immediately."

The subject was accordingly dropped; and nothing more was heard of or from Paul Lyndon for the few days longer that the Grangers remained in London. During these days their social engagements were so many that Moira saw very little of her new friend; but, since it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, Leila profited immensely by this state of affairs. For, instead of having to submit to the uninspiring companionship of her mother's maid whenever she went out, she had the altogether delightful companionship of Miss Fortescue, and the great pleasure of playing guide to the latter, and introducing her to those famous places and sights of London which strangers and foreigners are more likely to see than the inhabitants of the great city, and with which Leila herself had been made acquainted as part of the educational process of travel.

The two fared forth together, therefore,—Moira always closely veiled, for she had an abiding fear of being recognized by some one as the famous actress of "La Princesse Lointaine,"—and in the course of these pilgrimages their friendship grew apace: Moira finding the precocious child as attractive as she was intelligent, while Leila speedily conceived a passion-

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ate devotion for the beautiful and sympathetic companion so unexpectedly bestowed upon her.

"O mummy, she's just too lovely for anything!" she told her mother one day in an access of enthusiasm. "I'm so glad you found her, and that she's going home with us. I've never enjoyed anything in all my life as much as I have enjoyed going out with her here in London. I thought I knew all about the places we've seen, but she's told me so many more interesting things than I ever knew before. Westminster Abbey now,—did you know that it was really an abbey, full of Catholic monks, for about a thousand years before it was made a burying-place?"

"Oh, yes, of course! And you should have known it, too, if you had studied history properly," Mrs. Granger replied, in the intervals of the toilette she was making for some social function.

"Miss Fortescue made you see how differently it must have looked in the old days," Leila went on, her elbows on the dressing-table and her eyes fixed meditatively on her mother. "In the cloisters she was so sad that she almost seemed about to cry; and she said it was because she was thinking how the monks must have felt when they were turned out of that lovely place forever. It *was* hard, wasn't it?"

"I dare say it was," Mrs. Granger admitted; "but it was at the time of the Reformation, you know."

"I know." Leila's tone seemed to indicate rather a low opinion of the period mentioned. "That was the time Henry VIII murdered his wives, and Queen Elizabeth murdered Mary, Queen of Scots. I saw their tombs—Queen Elizabeth's and Queen Mary's,

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I mean—in Westminster Abbey; but Miss Fortescue says that, although their bodies are so close together, their souls are probably very far apart.”

“Upon my word” (Mrs. Granger laughed, for it was impossible to mistake what was implied in the last words concerning the eternal fate of the illustrious personages alluded to), “Miss Fortescue seems to be interpreting history for you from the strictly Catholic point of view.”

“She said she didn’t want to do that,” Leila explained. “But we just couldn’t get away from it. For all these old places *were* Catholic, you know, and it’s been such a little time since the Reformation; while everything interesting seems to have happened before it, and everything beautiful was built before it. There’s Queen Eleanor’s tomb now,—the Queen for whom all the crosses were erected, where her body rested after she was dead. Miss Fortescue told me such lovely things about *her*. She seemed to make me see her, as well as the monks in the cloisters of the Abbey.”

“I’ve no doubt she could make you see anything she wanted,” said Mrs. Granger. “I almost wish I had been with you.”

“You’d wish it still more if you knew how delightful it is to visit places with her,” Leila intimated. “I never knew before that history could be as interesting as a fairy-tale,—even more interesting because it has all really happened. Oh, I hope she is going to stay with us a long, long time!”

“You needn’t hope for that,” her mother warned her. “I’m afraid she may not be with us very long. But you can enjoy her society while you have her,

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and" (admonishingly) "you can profit by her beautiful French."

"We talk French almost all the time when we are out together," Leila said; "and she makes it so easy—it's like hearing music to listen to her—that I don't mind the verbs at all. I'm sorry you think she won't be with us long. Why not?"

"Well, she has duties that will probably soon call her away."

"What kind of duties?"

"My dear, how often have I told you that you mustn't ask so many questions! I declare I think the old-fashioned idea that children should be seen and not heard wasn't a bad one!"

"I think it was a beastly one!" Leila announced indignantly. "How were children to learn anything if they weren't allowed to talk? Why, almost all all I know I've learned by asking questions!"

"In that case, you certainly ought to have accumulated a large supply of information," her mother remarked, with a heartfelt sigh. "But remember," she added quickly, "that you must on no account ask questions—I mean personal questions—of Miss Fortescue. That would be shockingly ill-bred."

"I shouldn't think of such a thing," Leila replied injuredly. "I've always heard that one mustn't ask personal questions; but I'd like to know what the duties are that will call her away. She says her mother and father are dead. Is she going to be married?"

"Certainly not."

"Then what——"

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"Leila, that's enough! Go at once and have your hair brushed and your dress changed."

As has been stated before, Leila knew the exact line where obedience to her mother became imperative; and she accordingly departed, with her curiosity ungratified. But it was often remarked by those who came in contact with her that she had a wonderful tenacity in holding on to a point; and, having heard of the existence of something which made it probable that she might be deprived of the companionship she found so fascinating, she promised herself to discover what this was by any means short of personal questions—those being in honor barred,—in order to learn if there was not some way of averting the threatened misfortune.

But the delightful pilgrimages about London and listening to poetical stories of the past came all too soon to an end. The day appointed for the sailing of the *Mauretania*, on which the passage of the party was engaged, was now at hand, and they left London for their port of departure.

The details of going on shipboard were very familiar to all but Moira, and Leila had again the satisfaction of acting as guide to the latter over the ship she knew so well. But they had come on deck as the great vessel moved majestically out to sea; and Moira, standing by the rail, was gazing wistfully toward the shores she was leaving, acutely conscious of what the French call a *serrement du cœur* in the thought of the wide distance she was about to put between herself and her husband, and the nature of the adventure on which she was bound, when an ex-

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clamanation from the child beside her suddenly caught her attention.

"O Mr. Paul!" Leila cried joyously, in a tone of mingled surprise and pleasure. "I'm so glad to see you! I didn't know you were going home with us."

"I didn't know it myself," a voice of deep but pleasant *timbre* answered. "I'm delighted to see you, Leilita. Of course, your father and mother are on board also?"

"Oh, yes; they are here somewhere!" Leila said. "I haven't seen them for some time; I've been busy showing Miss Fortescue about the ship. You don't know Miss Fortescue," she added in a lower tone. "She's mummy's secretary, and I like her ever so much. I'll introduce you to her."

"Pray do!" the pleasant voice replied, with a laughing cadence.

And so Leila, who was a very sophisticated young person, touched the arm of the graceful figure beside her.

"Miss Fortescue," she said eagerly, "please let me introduce my old friend, Mr. Paul Lyndon."

CHAPTER IX

PAUL LYNDON, who was always amused by Leila's assumption of mature manners, lifted his hat smilingly in acknowledgment of her introduction to the girl, who hastily turned around, but the next moment found his attention strangely arrested by the face which looked at him.

It was not only that this face was so pale, as if the blood had suddenly ebbed away from it; nor yet because its beauty struck him like a blow; but it was chiefly because the eyes—wonderful eyes, in that first instant he felt them to be!—held a startled light which an unexpected introduction to a stranger hardly appeared to justify. It occurred to him that Mrs. Granger's secretary, of whom he had never heard before, was possibly very shy, and not accustomed to meeting unknown men in such abrupt fashion; so, with a charitable intention of putting her at her ease, he said in his pleasant, mellow tones:

"Leila is right in presenting me as an old friend, Miss Fortescue, since I've had the privilege of knowing her all her life, and that naturally seems a very long time to her. You've probably observed that her tone is generally quite patriarchal—or perhaps I should say matriarchal."

"I have observed it," Miss Fortescue answered, with a sound in her voice as of breath quickly caught, which did not, however, prevent his noticing the singularly musical inflections of her speech. "But I fancied that most American children were like that,"

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she added, after a brief pause, in which he was conscious that she made a distinct effort to grasp self-possession and speak carelessly.

"You are not well acquainted with American children, then?" he asked, with a glance which recognized the foreign note in her appearance and manner.

"I am not acquainted with them at all," she answered. "Leila is the first American child I have ever known."

"Well, Leila is very true to type in most respects," he said, smiling again at that young person; "only you mustn't imagine that all American children are possessed of her remarkable poise and worldly knowledge."

"I think it's a shame that you begin laughing at me as soon as we meet!" Leila reproached him. "He's always doing it, Miss Fortescue. Please don't mind him!"

"I shall not mind him," Miss Fortescue assured her. "I always judge my friends for myself."

The tone of the last sentence seemed to hold a significance which Lyndon's quick ear caught, and which made him wonder a little whether shyness had been, indeed, the cause of the speaker's discomposure a moment or two earlier. But before he could pursue the conversation further, Mrs. Granger suddenly bore down upon them, with something closely approaching consternation in her face and voice.

"Why, Paul Lyndon!" she exclaimed. "Where did you come from?"

"From Paris, *via* London," he replied, as he turned to shake hands with her. "I stopped in the last city long enough to call at your hotel, but was

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informed that you had just left. So, my own return passage being engaged on the *Mauretania*, I hurried on to catch the ship, in which I've barely succeeded. I'm glad we're to be fellow-voyagers."

"Um-m, yes," Mrs. Granger assented, without very much cordiality. Then, taking his arm, she led him firmly away. "Robert's about somewhere," she said in answer to his inquiry for that gentleman; "but never mind him just now. I want to hear what you have been doing in Paris."

"You'll be gratified to hear that I have been doing exactly what you foretold. In other words, I have been making efforts which resulted in complete failure."

"Ah!" (There was no mistaking the relief in her tone.) "But, although you've learned that I was right in this case, I presume you'll be no more amenable to advice on another occasion."

"I can't answer for that," he said. "You might not be in a position to give as correct advice on another occasion. In this case, however, you were entirely right. Royall's wife has disappeared from Paris, and left no address by which it is possible to trace her."

"Didn't I tell you so?"

"Of course, you did. Haven't I just been acknowledging that fact? Therefore, when I was fully convinced of the accuracy of your information, I hastened back to London to ask you one or two questions. If I had found you, and if you had answered those questions, I should not be on the *Mauretania* now."

"You may set your mind at rest about that," she

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told him. "If you had found me in London, I should not have answered your questions."

"How can you be so sure of that?"

"Because I have no doubt of the nature of the questions. You wanted me to give you some clue to the whereabouts of Royall's wife, didn't you?"

"And if I did, wasn't it possible that I might have convinced you that it was well for you to do so?"

"Never!" She met his eyes with a flash of defiance in her own. "You could not have convinced me of that, unless you were prepared to disavow altogether the purpose in finding her which you so shamelessly expressed when I saw you last."

"'Shameless' is rather severe, don't you think?" Lyndon suggested. "I thought you a better friend than to condemn me so unsparingly."

"It's because I am, and always have been, a good friend of yours that I condemn your present conduct," Mrs. Granger returned.

"Because I am doing, or am anxious to do, my best, according to my judgment, to bring Royall back to his family and to his duties, and save my uncle from a broken heart?"

"No; but because you are trying to do these things in an unworthy and—I must say it!—dishonorable manner."

"My dear Mrs. Granger!"

"Isn't it dishonorable to attempt to induce a man to leave the woman to whom he is married, and avail himself of the disgraceful laws that permit divorce for any trivial excuse?"

"You forget that the probable character of the woman justifies——"

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"There again! How dare you speak of the probable character of the woman when you know nothing about her, and when you refuse to listen to what *I* know? Above all, how dare you think of approaching any woman, not utterly vile, with such a proposal as you are ready to make to your cousin's wife? And you believe that I would have helped you to find and insult her with this proposal! Although you've known me a long time, Paul Lyndon, it's clear that you don't know me yet."

"So it appears," Lyndon acquiesced. "I thought you an unusually reasonable woman (you've been so frank with me that you'll excuse my being equally frank with you), and I find that you are not reasonable at all, at least on this subject."

"Because I refuse to look at it with your eyes?"

"Because you refuse to look at it with any eyes but your own. And there are always two sides to every question."

"There are not two sides to a moral question: there's always a plain right and a plain wrong."

"I don't regard this as a moral question," Lyndon said. "But we won't discuss it further, or I'm afraid our old friendship might suffer shipwreck, since you disapprove of me so utterly."

"I certainly disapprove of your conduct," Mrs. Granger repeated uncompromisingly. "But I believe you are doing yourself as much injustice as you are ready to do any one else. You feel so deeply for your uncle and your mother that you've lost your bearings, and you absolutely appear to believe that things can be made other than dishonorable and wrong because they happen to be legal."

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Lyndon started a little; for the last words went straight home to his inner consciousness, where he had, in truth, undergone a struggle before deciding that the circumstances justified taking advantage of laws which his higher sense had always condemned.

"I won't say that the end justifies the means," he answered; "for we know *that* is a fallacy, and a very dangerous one. But I fancy we are agreed that a desperate situation sometimes requires a desperate remedy."

Mrs. Granger shook her head.

"Even if the situation were as desperate as you think it is, it wouldn't justify the remedy you propose," she replied. "But since, fortunately, you haven't been able to approach either Royall or his wife with this proposal—and I say *fortunately*, because I'm quite sure that Royall would never forgive it,—I think that, as you remarked a moment ago, we had better let the subject drop, or our friendship might not be able to bear the strain of continued discussion. And here comes Robert, to make a diversion at present."

Mr. Granger, indeed, approached at the moment, beaming with pleasure at the unexpected sight of a familiar acquaintance.

"Hallo, Lyndon!" he cried cheerily. "This *is* a stroke of luck, that we should be crossing together. But I'd no idea that you'd be going home so soon."

"You've forgotten that I told you I came over altogether on business?" Lyndon replied. "Having accomplished in one case, and failed to accomplish in another, what I had in view, there was no reason for my staying longer."

Mr. Granger glanced at his wife, with an inter-

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rogative lift of one eyebrow—a facial trick which Leila had long and vainly tried to imitate,—but, receiving no information from her, was driven to obtain satisfaction of his curiosity from Lyndon himself.

"I suppose, then, that you weren't able to accomplish the end you had in view in going to Paris," he conjectured.

"I accomplished nothing at all," Lyndon answered. "All my efforts to learn Mrs. Royall Harcourt's present address were fruitless. Nobody seemed to know—or nobody would tell—where she was to be found."

Again Mr. Granger glanced at his wife—rather a curious glance this time,—and cleared his throat before he spoke.

"That was—er—rather unfortunate," he said.

"On the contrary," Mrs. Granger broke in, "it was in my opinion, as I have just told Paul, extremely fortunate. And we've agreed, he and I, that we will not discuss the subject any further."

"Very sensible, I'm sure," Mr. Granger remarked. "It's always best to avoid subjects on which people don't agree. By the by, what has become of Leila? I haven't seen her since we came on board."

Mrs. Granger nodded toward the rail.

"She's yonder, seeing the last of England with Miss Fortescue," she said. "It was she who first met Paul; I found him with her a few minutes ago."

"I didn't recognize her until she spoke to me," said Lyndon. "She has grown since I saw her last,—though she's quite the same Leila. And, then, of course, I didn't know her companion, who, she tells

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me, is your secretary. When did you set up a secretary?" he asked, smiling.

"Oh, quite recently!" Mrs. Granger replied. "The term 'secretary' is rather a comprehensive one, for Miss Fortescue is really a great deal beside that. For instance, she has been of the greatest possible assistance to me lately as Leila's companion, and the child is devoted to her."

"That's quite evident," said Lyndon; and then: "Has Miss Fortescue been long with you?" he asked, a little curiously.

But Mrs. Granger did not apparently hear the question,—at least she neglected to answer it.

"I suppose Leila *has* grown," she observed, with her eyes fixed on the child's figure, as it leaned against the rail, close by the tall, graceful form of her companion. "Of course, seeing her all the time, I don't notice it so much. I had rather intended to leave her at school in Paris—her French needs improvement,—but my heart failed; and when I found that Miss Fortescue could give her all she needs at present, it was an excuse to put off the evil day of separation. Now tell me about the people and things at home. I hadn't opportunity to ask you anything when we met in London."

So the subject of Miss Fortescue was diplomatically shelved; and Mrs. Granger hoped that Lyndon would ask no more awkward questions about her secretary. It was really not like him to ask questions at all; and the fact that he did so was a proof that he recognized something remarkable in the personality of the girl with whom he had, for a moment only, been brought into contact.

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"But he would have been very stupid if he hadn't recognized it," she said to herself. "And, to do him justice, he is never stupid. Now, I wonder what Moira thought of *him!*"

It was some time, however, before she could satisfy herself on this point; for even after Lyndon and Mr. Granger had gone away together, and she could summon Moira to the spot where the deck-chairs of the party were placed, it was necessary to get rid of Leila, who clung like a burr to the latter. But a peremptory command to go and walk with her father—who was now, together with Lyndon, pacing the long deck in shipboard fashion—disposed of her for a time. And Mrs. Granger was at last able to turn to the girl seated beside her and plunge into the subject uppermost in both their minds.

"It must have been a shock to have Paul Lyndon hurled at you, as it were, in such unexpected fashion!" she said. "It almost took my breath away when I saw him talking to you."

Moira smiled a little.

"It quite took *my* breath away when Leila mentioned his name," she replied. "But perhaps it was best that the meeting was so unexpected, for sometimes preparation makes one more nervous. When a sudden call on self-possession comes one must rise to meet it."

"One doesn't always, I'm afraid," Mrs. Granger said; "but I am glad you were able to do so on this occasion. Who could have foreseen his turning up in such a manner, and running across Leila before I saw him, or had a chance to utter a word of warning to you!"

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"It was better so," Moira repeated. "But I've been anxious to know what he learned in Paris."

"Nothing," Mrs. Granger announced in a distinct tone of triumph. "He has come back disappointed and unsuccessful, having failed completely to obtain any clue to Mrs. Royall Harcourt's present place of residence."

The girl beside her did not answer immediately,—perhaps because the person under discussion was at that instant passing before them in the procession of promenaders. Her gaze followed his figure meditatively for a moment before she said:

"It must have been a great disappointment. I am rather sorry for him."

"Moira!—how *can* you be?"

The beautiful sapphire eyes, under their dark lashes, met very quietly the astonished gaze which accompanied the question.

"I am sorry," Moira explained, "because disappointment is hard to bear, and he has come very far to meet it; and also because it would be so easy to gratify his desire to find Mrs. Royall Harcourt—if one chose to do so."

Mrs. Granger regarded her suspiciously.

"Does that mean that you are thinking of gratifying his desire?" she inquired.

"Not at all," Moira answered. "I am quite convinced that it is best he should be disappointed; but, nevertheless, I am sorry for him."

"Well, I'm not;" Mrs. Granger's lips closed like a steel-trap over the words. "And you wouldn't be either," she added, "if you heard him talk on the

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subject,—if you had any idea of the obstinacy and prejudice he displays.”

The girl looked out over the sea, with the same meditative gaze with which she had followed Paul Lyndon's figure down the deck.

“I feel,” she said, “that his prejudice is very natural, if he thinks of me as Royall's father does.”

“But what right has he to think of you in such a manner?” her friend demanded. “In Governor Harcourt it is to some extent excusable. He is an old man, and he belongs, in his opinions and standards, to another generation, when many things were regarded very differently from the way they are regarded now. But Paul Lyndon is of this generation, and he has no right to be so narrow-minded and pig-headed.”

Moirá laughed.

“He does not look as if he were either,” she answered. “I've seldom seen a face that expressed less narrow-mindedness or—pig-headedness.”

“You reached that conclusion very quickly, since you saw him for only a minute or two.”

“But one needs no more than an instant for an impression. And hasn't somebody said that ‘We know only those perfectly whom we divine at first sight’?”

“And do you imagine that you have divined Paul Lyndon? He's rather a hard nut to crack, I assure you.”

“Perhaps it's *that* I have divined,” Moirá said, with a subtle smile. “Hard nuts excite interest, you know; and as I looked at his face I thought that I might like him—if I had not been so thoroughly

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aware that liking from me would be unacceptable to him."

"You've a chance to put that to the test," Mrs. Granger declared. "Fate has given him into your hand. While we are on this ship, he can't get away from you, and you must not avoid *him*. Let him know you; and by the time we reach the shores of America I believe that your work—the work you've set out to do—will be accomplished. For if you win Paul Lyndon over to your side, you may feel sure that you have won Governor Harcourt."

"Which is as much as to say," Moira commented, "that Governor Harcourt has greater respect for the judgment of his nephew than for that of his son,—and it is a hard saying."

"It may be a hard saying, but it is a true one," Mrs. Granger told her. "And you must face things as they are, if you wish to succeed in what you have undertaken. You may be jealous for Royall——"

"I *am* jealous for him," Moira broke in. "It is unjust that his cousin should take his place in his father's esteem."

"At least, it is not Paul Lyndon's fault," Mrs. Granger said. "Get your mind clear on that point. So far from ever trying to displace his cousin, he has often taken Royall's part, when the incompatibility of nature and tastes between father and son reached an acute point. The only thing which gives me any patience with him at present," the speaker went on, "is that, in his wrong-headed way, he is once more trying to reconcile them."

"By eliminating *me*!"

"Yes," Mrs. Granger nodded, "by eliminating

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you; so it is for you to prove to him that you are not the type of woman whom one desires to eliminate."

The sapphire eyes turned on her again, and now there was a light in their depths, as of a challenge accepted.

"I think," Moira said quietly, "that I can possibly succeed in convincing him of that."

CHAPTER X

IT WAS later on the day of their departure from Liverpool that Lyndon found himself again in the neighborhood of the beautiful girl who had been introduced to him as Miss Fortescue. For some time after luncheon he sat on deck, talking to Mrs. Granger; but when she, declaring that sea-air always made her sleepy, finally retired to her cabin for a siesta, he began to pace the long sweep of the deck, with a sense of enjoyment in the ideal conditions of weather above and sea below.

And so it was that he presently came upon Miss Fortescue and Leila, established in a secluded nook, and caught some sounds which told him that the former was reading aloud in the most musical voice, the most exquisite French he had ever heard. Sinking silently into a vacant chair near by, he listened to the flow of melodious words as one listens to perfect music, enthralled by a charm which blended, and was in his memory destined forever to blend, with the salt tang of the air which came in such crystal purity and freshness over wide leagues of wind-swept ocean, with the tender blue of the overarching sky, the white flash of gulls' wings in the sunshine, and the glittering liquid plain stretching afar to the remote line where sea and sky melted together. It was a picture which was to remain associated always with the beautiful lines which fell in such lovely cadence from the lips repeating them,—lines which, he

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soon perceived, brought before the "inner eye" another picture of the sea.

Presently, when at the end of an act—for he also perceived that he was listening to drama as well as poetry,—the reader's voice paused, Leila, whose gaze, filled with the light of dreams, had been fastened on the distant horizon, glanced around and saw him.

"O Mr. Paul," she exclaimed, "I'm so glad you are here! Have you been listening long? It's the *loveliest* story that Miss Fortescue is reading! Do you know it?"

"I'm sorry to say that I don't," Lyndon replied, conscious that Miss Fortescue's eyes had turned on him, with the same startled look which he had seen in them before; "but I've been enjoying the reading immensely, and hope I'll be pardoned for playing the part of an uninvited auditor. May I ask the name of the poem?" he added, addressing Moira directly.

He was struck by her hesitation in answering—she was, in fact, wondering whether the name would rouse any suspicion in his mind,—but after an instant she replied:

"It is a drama, and it is called 'La Princesse Lointaine'."

"The Princess Far-Away," Leila obligingly translated. "It's exactly like a fairy-tale. There's a prince, who is a poet as well as a prince; and he has heard of the beautiful princess far away, from the pilgrims who have returned to France from the Holy Land. So he sets out to seek her, in his ship, where all the sailors are in love with the idea of the beautiful princess, too; and they've been sailing and sailing

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and sailing over the sea, until they are worn out and nearly starving, when at last they come to Tripoli, where the princess lives. But the prince is desperately ill and almost dying; so he sends his friend, Bertrand, ashore, to let her know that he has arrived—for the pilgrims have told the princess about *him*, too,—and to beg her to come to him before he dies. Then Bertrand puts on the prince's armor and goes ashore, and fights his way to the princess, and kills the Green Knight who is guarding her for the emperor, who wants to marry her. And when the princess sees him she thinks *he* is the prince; and when he tells her that he isn't, and begs her to go to Joffroy, who is dying, she says: 'No.' And then—O Miss Fortescue, please go on, and let us hear what happens then!"

But Miss Fortescue closed the book from which she had been reading.

"I think you have heard enough for the present," she said. "To sustain interest, the story will be 'continued in our next'."

"But I don't need to have my interest sustained," Leila pleaded. "I'm just as much interested now as I possibly can be, so why won't you go on? Are you tired of reading aloud?"

"I never tire of reading aloud," Moira answered. "I love the melody of words so much that I often read aloud to myself for the pleasure of the sound."

"Then *why* won't you go on now? I'm sure Mr. Paul would like to hear the rest of the story,—wouldn't you, Mr. Paul?"

"Very much, indeed," replied Lyndon. "But since it is possible that Miss Fortescue objects to an uninvited auditor, I will reluctantly depart."

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He rose as he spoke—more reluctantly than his half-laughing words would have indicated,—and was about to move away, when Miss Fortescue lifted her hand with a quick, detaining gesture. At the same moment he again met her eyes, and there was nothing now either startled or shy in their almost imperious brilliance.

"Don't go, Mr. Lyndon,—that is, if you would really care to remain," she said. "Since Leila is so insistent, I will continue the reading."

"And you are sure that I shall not disturb you by remaining?" Lyndon asked.

She smiled; and if he could have read the meaning of that smile, he would have seen the vision which rose before her of the great audiences she had faced and charmed in the Athens of the modern world.

"You will not disturb me in the least," she told him quietly; and then, as he resumed his seat, she opened the book in her hand and again began to read.

Or was it not, rather, to recite the lines which were so ineffaceably retained by memory? She kept her eyes upon the printed page before her; but, for the rest, her present surroundings vanished, and she was once more "*La Princesse Lointaine*" in her distant castle, with its windows looking down upon the harbor, where lay the ship which had brought her lover across the sea to seek the fair ideal of his dreams. Again she awaited the coming of Bertrand in the beautiful palace hall, "half romance, half Oriental"; its marble floor strewn no longer with lilies, but with the red roses symbolic of passion; herself a dream of loveliness in her picturesque archaic garments; and again there entered to her the faithful

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friend who bore the prince's message and his prayer for her presence.

It was in the scene which followed that Moira had won her highest triumph with that critical world of Paris, which, however it may be led away to worship false gods of novelty and excess, never fails to recognize the true note of genius and fine art when this is presented to it. So it was no wonder that, as she read the beautiful lines, her voice—that golden voice, which had been likened to the matchless tones of the greatest living French actress—should have thrilled her listeners as they had never been thrilled before. For it was not only the natural beauty of the organ, nor her trained and perfect enunciation of the limpid French, but the spell lay deeper, in that power of expression which can come only through the mind and soul, and which is the incommunicable heritage of the true artist.

Lyndon, recognizing this power, was more keenly conscious of its effect because he knew himself to be not easily moved through the emotions. Many things, at many times, which thrilled other people had left him unmoved; but now he felt the inmost founts of emotion stirred by this wonderful voice, which interpreted the rise and struggle of love in the two hearts, and seemed to sound the gamut of feeling from rapture to despair. Then, like the call of a trumpet to battle, came the higher note, the demand of honor and duty against the claims of love; and here the struggle grew so intense, the violin tones were so charged with depth of meaning, that Lyndon almost held his breath as he listened. Never, he felt, could he forget the passionate accents with which

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Melissinde begs Bertrand to turn away from thought of the ship, where lay his dying friend, and be happy,—the pleading urgency with which she cries:*

This palace be our home, we'll leave it ne'er!
Now see the warmth of roses on the floor
Where lilies spread their coldness in the morn!—
The window's closed, I say; abolish fear!—
Pale flowers born of dream are now forsworn;
Love giveth richer blossoms. Smile thou here!
We shall ignore the world. How should we know?
We'll question nobody. E'er at my feet
Thy life. And naught shall be but our embrace.
Why should we feel remorse or even fear?
Who ever spoke of galleys, of Rudel?
No living soul! Naught's true but our love.
Beyond this window here, the golden beach
Extends toward the blue; no galley's there.
Some day, far off, when we shall open it,
The window'll show but light, and nothing more.
And then we'll laugh. What childish story's this
About the hoisting of a sail that's black?
An idle tale, Bertrand!—The window's closed!—
Oh, think of naught, beloved,—naught!
Why should we see, call up most awful things
Beyond this window? See how calm it looks!
It smiles in its enamel and its gold. . . .

BERTRAND.

You speak forever of that window there!

And when the sea wind blows the window open, she bids him avoid looking out, lest he might see the

*For the benefit of readers who are more familiar with English than French, M. Rostand's beautiful lines are given in translation here.

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black sail hoisted, which was the signal agreed upon to tell of the prince's death, and reminds him that—

. . . every happiness,
Behind it, has an open window so,
Through which there comes a breath that chills the soul.
The window's ever there to claim its own.
Men turn and crouch. They will not go to look,
For they would see stern duty's galley there
To call them from the bliss that holds them fast.
Or else, if Fate had spoke, they'd see reproach
In waving folds of black aloft, Remorse!
So nestle they in cushions, motionless;
They cling to happiness and to the dream
That one look through the window would destroy
They would not learn if they are murderers.
Let's do the same . . . in coward cushions' ease!

BERTRAND.

Yes, let us stay! Alas, poor woman, though,
How can we stay? Have I, hast thou a soul
Debased enough to leave us happy thus?
We're surely not as others are!

MELISSINDE.

We are!

I love thee!

Low and sweet as music's self, the last words were
breathed; and fancy pictured Bertrand kneeling at
her feet, forgetful of his friend, until voices below
the window speak of a black sail upon a galley; and
how terrible then was the cry of remorse which burst
from the man's tortured soul!

My God! Now all is done!
He's dead! dead! dead! My brother and my friend!

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All's over! Gone . . . without the bliss supreme
He sought! . . . And I . . . and you, . . . what have
We done?

MELISSINDE.

It's awful! . . . But at least I have you now!

BERTRAND.

You have a traitor! Oh, the worthy mate!

Through the intense emotion of the scene in which despair came to both the noble souls, betrayed by passion to a dastard deed, the marvellously modulated tones read on; and then, like sunlight breaking through dark clouds, came the princess' exclamation of joy when, going to the window, she cries out:

Bertrand, the sail is white!

Against an azure sky!

As white as hope of pardon! Gracious God,
Prolong, I pray, the whiteness of the sail
In which I see, at last, my star supreme!
O duty, voice that we subdue in vain,
I come! I come to thee, Joffroy Rudel!
I come! And thou art dearer to me now
By all the ill I nearly did to thee!

With a note of passionate exaltation the last words were uttered; and in the pause which followed, the listeners were silent, held by the tension of emotion roused, until, as if to anticipate and prevent comment, the magical voice again took up the tale, carrying them to the deck of the galley, where lay the dying prince. It was impossible for anything to have been more exquisitely rendered than the scene where

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the princess comes to him,—for in truth, to herself, Moira was acting rather than reading. Again she trod the deck, and knelt beside the dying lover who had followed his dream of her from afar; again she heard, and made her listeners hear, his pathetic, broken utterances, ending at last in the cry of grateful rapture:

Now I can die . . . my cup of bliss is full!
Be thanked, O Lord! Be thanked, O Melissinde!
How many sink, exhausted by the road,
And never see their Princess Far-Away!

And at the final end, when the princess' last words had been on the same high note of exaltation:

Farewell! No tears! I go to holy peace.
I've learnt at last what bliss essential is.

There was again a pause of silence, more significant than speech, before even Leila's voice was heard.

"Oh," she breathed then, with a deep sigh, "I'm sorry it has ended! I never thought I could have enjoyed anything in French so much, or understood it so well. But I'm awfully sorry that the princess didn't marry Bertrand and live happily ever after. Aren't *you* sorry, Miss Fortescue?"

Miss Fortescue looked out over the sea with her dark-lashed eyes; and it was as if she were gazing beyond the horizon at the magical Land of Imagination, where the Princess Far-Away had made her choice, as she said softly:

"No, I am not sorry. The end is much more beautiful as it is than if the princess were to live happily ever after with Bertrand. *That* end would

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have left one with a sense of disappointment; but this end lifts the spirit, as a noble choice always does."

"But the princess *loved* Bertrand," Leila cried protestingly; "and shouldn't one marry the man one loves?"

Miss Fortescue, turning her gaze from the distant sea line, smiled at the eager questioner; and something in the smile struck Lyndon as the most exquisite thing he had ever seen.

"Yes," she replied; "one should marry the man one loves—unless honor and duty stand in the path. But if they do, then there is something higher and more imperative than happiness to be sought. You'll understand this better when you are older."

Leila looked doubtful.

"I don't know," she said. "Do people always understand it when they are older?"

Involuntarily Miss Fortescue's glance met Lyndon's with a gleam of amusement.

"Not always," she answered. "There are many people who never understand it. Human nature is very much inclined to be selfish, you know; and nowadays selfishness is often preached as a duty—the right of the individual to happiness, it is called,—and, of course, that is a very agreeable doctrine."

"But you don't believe in it?" Leila queried.

"No, I don't believe in it," the soft voice told her; "for it would kill everything fine and heroic in the world, since sacrifice is the root of heroism."

Leila made an expressive grimace.

"I don't like sacrifice," she declared.

"We none of us like it," Moira said; "but it is

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the law of the higher life, and the capability of making it is the test of character."

While Leila appeared to be turning this over in her mind, Lyndon's deeper tones broke into the conversation:

"Will you let me say how thoroughly I agree with you, Miss Fortescue? In my opinion, the doctrine of the right of the individual to seek happiness at any cost to others is the most demoralizing influence in the world to-day. And, considering how this doctrine pervades modern literature, it is refreshing to find a writer—and a French writer, at that—who has the courage to present the higher ideal, the necessity to sacrifice happiness when duty stands in the way."

A smile curved Miss Fortescue's charming lips for a moment.

"It is possible that you are not very familiar with French writers, Mr. Lyndon," she suggested. "Or perhaps, like a great many other people, you judge our literature by its decadents, not knowing how far the pendulum has swung back toward the old ideals with many of our finest writers."

Lyndon looked surprised.

"You talk as if you were a Frenchwoman," he said. "And yet your name——"

"I am half French in blood," she interrupted hastily; "and I have lived almost all my life in France."

"I might have guessed that you were partly French, if only from the way you speak the language," Lyndon said. "But to return to our subject: your 'Princesse Lointaine' strikes me as a singularly inspiring, as well as an intensely poetical, drama, be-

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cause it so clearly symbolizes the undaunted pursuit of the ideal. In that pursuit there is no point where the spirit can rest satisfied, and, therefore, we leave Melissinde and Bertrand seeking an ever higher ideal than they have already attained by their choice of duty over love. And you are right about that choice: in order to obtain the heroic note—the note which has power to thrill and exalt the soul—one *must* have sacrifice. To appreciate this we have only to imagine how different the effect would be if the lovers had persisted in seizing happiness as their right, in disregard of honor and duty.”

As he spoke, he did not understand why Moira looked at him so curiously. In fact, she was thinking: “And this is the man who has crossed the sea to urge his cousin to break the most sacred tie that can be formed, and to set at naught all honor and duty! How is it possible to reconcile his acts and his words?” And she was the more puzzled to reconcile these inconsistencies because the face at which she gazed, with an intentness of which she was hardly aware, seemed formed by nature to express the sentiments he had uttered. Its clear-cut lines, the firmness of the mouth, and the keenness of the gray eyes, all spoke of austere standards and ideals,—of one who would not hesitate to choose the higher and the harder path were such choosing required of him, and who might have been conceived to be the last person possible to counsel another to take the lower path of self-indulgence and broken faith.

Thinking of these things, she was silent so long that Leila found her chance to rush into the speech for which she was always ready.

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"Would you have felt that way—I mean about the princess and sacrifice—if you had been Bertrand, Mr. Paul?" she inquired.

"I hope so, Leilita," he answered, with a smile. "But man is weak, and one can never tell with certainty how one might feel and act under temptation."

Again he did not understand the flash which came into the beautiful eyes still regarding him,—a flash, it almost seemed, of scorn.

"Mr. Lyndon is wise not to speak too confidently on that point," Miss Fortescue observed in a detached tone; and then, as she rose from her chair: "I think," she said, addressing Leila, "that we had now better go and find your mother."

"You'll find her, I have reason to believe, in the land of dreams," Lyndon said, as he also rose and walked with them down the deck. "At least she left me some time ago, saying that she was going to her cabin for a siesta."

"Mummy always sleeps a lot when she's at sea," Leila remarked. "She says it keeps her from being seasick. I'm never seasick; are you, Miss Fortescue?"

"I have been at sea too little to be able to tell," Miss Fortescue replied. "But no one could be seasick to-day,—the ocean is so calm, this ship so steady. Ah, it is all delicious!" she cried, with a note of sudden rapture in her voice, as she paused for a moment by the rail, and turned her face to meet the sea-breeze, while her eyes sought the remote distance, where sky and water met and blended.

Leila's gaze followed hers, and fastened on a distant sail.

"That makes one think of the galley of the

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prince," she said; "sailing and sailing and sailing, in search of the Princess Far-Away."

"It does," Lyndon agreed. "I fancy it will be some time before we can see a sail without thinking of that galley." Then he glanced at the volume in Miss Fortescue's hand. "Since I was so unfortunate as not to hear the first part of the drama," he said, "may I beg to be allowed to read it?"

He was once more oddly struck by her hesitation in answering, and could not resist the impression that she was unwilling to give the book to him. Moira herself hardly knew the cause of this unwillingness; for the copy of the play was a new one, purchased in London for Leila's benefit, and, therefore, contained no mark or name to betray her own identity. But what she felt was an altogether instinctive and unreasoning disinclination to let this man come any closer to the ideal which she had embodied until it had become a part of herself. All dramatic artists are strongly possessed by this feeling,—that a character into which they have poured their own personality, in presenting it, has become a part of themselves in a manner and to a degree which makes it hard to see an alien touch upon it. And here was not only an alien, but an unfriendly touch; for, although Lyndon had expressed admiration for "*La Princesse Lointaine*," and sympathy with the ideal which it presented, Moira knew, or believed that she knew, what his true standards of conduct were, and how he had desired to act toward herself—the Far-Away Princess of Royall's love.

So it was only after a moment's struggle—of

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which Lyndon was as distinctly conscious as herself—that she extended the book to him.

“Of course,” she said, “you must wish to read the first part of a story of which you have heard the end. It’s only a pity that the proper course has been reversed, and so interest will be lost for you.”

“Not at all,” he answered, as he took the volume from her hand. “Interest for me lies less in the story than in the presentation and development of character. *That* is what makes a novel or a play worth while, and that is what I shall enjoy here—together with the poetic fancy and the exquisite French.”

“You will find both those things well worth study,” she told him, with gentle but unmistakable reserve of tone.

CHAPTER XI

IT WAS the reserve of Moira's tone that was most in Lyndon's mind when, after parting with her, he presently sat down alone to read Rostand's poetical drama; for if she had calculated in the most subtle manner how to arrest his attention, she could not have contrived to do so better than by her involuntary hesitations and coldness, and by the flash of scorn he had seen in her eyes. The last especially excited his wonder. What had he said to rouse scorn in Miss Fortescue's mind? He had agreed with her view of "*La Princesse Lointaine*," and had done so with a sincerity which it did not occur to him to think could be doubted. As he looked out over the sea, considering this, and finding no answer to the question, his thoughts wandered to the eyes themselves, which he was quite sure were the most remarkable, as well as the most beautiful, he had ever seen.

And it may be said here that such reflections as these were very unusual with Paul Lyndon; for it was one of the traits of his character which rendered him unsympathetic to the majority of people that he had always been singularly indifferent to women; that he rarely evinced liking for their society, and had never showed any sign of particular attraction toward even the fairest and most attractive of the sex. This being the case, it was as much a surprise to himself as it would have been to any of those who knew him best that he had been so immediately and deeply struck by the beautiful face, with the startled

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eyes, which had turned toward him when Leila introduced Miss Fortescue. And it was not only, or even chiefly, because of its beauty that this face had so strongly impressed him, but was rather because in the moment of vivid emotion (though why vivid he did not know) which gave such strange lustre to the eyes, he had caught sight of a soul, and the revelation was one not to be forgotten. Why the soul—for by that term alone he was able to express the impression he had received—should have sprung to its windows and looked at him in such fashion, again he did not know. But he knew that there had awakened in him at the instant a desire to know more about this woman, who was the first of her sex to rouse even curiosity in his breast. And he also knew that the curiosity had been greatly increased by her reading of "*La Princesse Lointaine*." The exquisite music of her tones haunted his ear, and in her interpretation of the drama he had again the distinct impression of a soul revealed, of a character which, in some mysterious manner, appealed irresistibly to his own.

Catching himself up at this point, as if conscious in what (to him) strange direction his thoughts were drifting, he transferred his gaze from the distant sea-line—that line where visions seem ever beckoning—to the volume in his hand. But, instead of reading the first act as he had intended, he turned over the pages until he found the place where Moira had been reading when he approached, and lingered upon the lines he had already heard, in order to recall the melody of her voice in repeating them.

Meanwhile Moira herself had found Mrs. Granger in the land of reality rather than of dreams;

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for she was wide awake, although lying in her berth, reading a novel, which she promptly laid aside as the girl entered her cabin.

"What a lovely color the sea-air has given you!" she cried admiringly. "You look as if you had been enjoying it intensely."

"So I have been," Moira answered, sinking down on the sofa opposite the berth. "But I don't think it is the sea-air which has given me a color," she added, pressing the palms of her hands to her cheeks, where a vivid rose-tint burned. "My face is flushed because I am excited, and I am excited because I have been reading—to myself acting again—my beloved 'Princesse Lointaine'."

"Why didn't you let me know? I should have been so glad to hear you. Of course, it was to Leila that you were reading?"

"Yes, to Leila and—to Mr. Lyndon."

"Is it possible!" Mrs. Granger sat up in the berth with an expression of liveliest interest. "How did that happen?"

"Oh, quite naturally! He was walking on deck, and saw and joined us,—at least when I looked around he was sitting near, listening to my reading."

"I hope he was interested."

Moira smiled. "There did not seem to be much doubt of that," she said.

"I suppose not," Mrs. Granger agreed. "He's not an impressionable person, but I'm sure that your reading was likely to impress even him. And it's odd—it's really *very* odd—that it should have been 'La Princesse Lointaine' you were reading. For Royall told me that it was in that play he saw you first

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and lost his heart to you. And if now his cousin should lose his——”

Moirá started.

“My dear Mrs. Granger!” she ejaculated.

“I mean only in the sense of being charmed, and recognizing what you really are,” Mrs. Granger explained. “There’s no danger of anything else with *him*; he is well known to be proof against the tender passion in any form. If it were otherwise, if he were like ordinary men in that respect, I’d tell him who you are at once. It would be the only safe thing to do. But as it is, there’s no necessity for any warning of the kind; and the more completely he is charmed, the more rightly he will be served for the shameful things he has meditated against you.”

“It seems rather strange that he should have meditated those things,” Moirá said slowly. “He does not strike one as a man who would counsel dishonorable conduct.”

“You couldn’t easily find a man with a higher standard of honor than Paul Lyndon has,” Mrs. Granger told her. “I know you find it hard to reconcile this with his conduct about Royall’s marriage. But you don’t understand—it has been hard even for *me* to understand—how his mind is obsessed with a preconceived idea of you, and how strongly his feeling is enlisted for his uncle.”

“I think I do understand; but, nevertheless——”

“Oh, yes, I agree that, nevertheless, there are no excuses to be made for him, and that he deserves to be punished! Well, punish him by charming him, so that when he learns who you are he will appreciate the full enormity of his conduct.”

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Moira was silent for a moment, and then: "You have still no doubt that it is best to go on as we have begun?" she asked.

"Not the least doubt, Mrs. Granger replied. "How could I have, when everything seems to promise so well? Have you ever heard of anything more extraordinary than the way matters have happened, and are continuing to happen,—my meeting Royall, and getting to know you in Paris, our plan for you to accompany me to America, Paul Lyndon's coming over just when he did, our meeting him in London, and his catching this ship to return by? It's as if it had been all arranged by Destiny to accomplish our purpose."

"It would certainly be a pity if things were so beautifully arranged to no purpose," Moira said, smiling.

"It's impossible,—quite impossible!" the other returned. "I'm confident it will all end like a romance, and we shall be able to laugh at Royall, who laughed at us for our romantic hopes."

"But romances end unhappily sometimes," Moira suggested.

"Not romances like this," her friend replied stoutly. "Not when everything occurs so wonderfully to forecast a happy ending. Even Leila has played her little part; for you wouldn't have been reading 'La Princesse Lointaine' but for her,—and, by the by, where is she?"

"I left her in the lounge with Mr. Granger. And I was glad she preferred to stay with him, because I wanted to say a few words to you alone. I can't help feeling as if this man should be told who I am."

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"Then you would spoil everything!" Mrs. Granger declared emphatically. "He would give you such a wide berth that you would have no further opportunity to let him learn anything about you, and you would never be able to approach Governor Harcourt. For heaven's sake, don't throw away a chance that seems almost miraculously given to you!"

Her tone was so tragically earnest that Moira laughed a little as she rose.

"Very well," she said; "I will not throw away the chance, and I promise you that this is my last qualm of doubt. Hereafter I shall play my part as if I were again 'La Princesse Lointaine'."

And it was, indeed, as "La Princesse Lointaine"—in other words, as the embodiment of an ideal and a dream—that she seemed to Lyndon during the days which followed. In her poetic beauty and grace, in the hint of remoteness that lay about her, in the wistfulness that filled her eyes when she gazed at the distant horizon, as if watching for a longed-for sail to appear there, and in the spell of a personality full of strange and unconsciously alluring fascination, she kept the French poet's Lady of Dreams ever in his mind.

And the spell thus exercised was the greater because after a little while Moira forgot that she was playing a part, and also forgot (unless reminded of the fact) that the man who walked the deck with her, or sat beside her during long hours looking out over the tranquil ocean, and talking of many things, was the cousin who had resolved to separate Royall and herself. From the first she had recognized some-

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thing likable in him; and as time went on, as they were thrown constantly together in the intimacy of shipboard life, she found herself liking him more and more. The stern strata in his character did not repel her; for there was an underlying strength in her own to which it appealed, and there were many points on which they developed strong sympathies of taste and opinion. It was not long before she said to herself, with a sense of surprise, that she had never seen any one of whom she could more readily make a friend than of this formidable cousin of Royall's, if once assured that his prejudice against herself had been dissipated.

And so it was that she set herself afresh to dissipate that prejudice by the simple expedient of revealing herself to him, remembering that he was to be punished by being charmed, and having little idea how far the charm had already wrought. For it was characteristic of the man that no one—and Moira least of all—suspected how deeply he was attracted. In fact, he hardly suspected it himself; for, having always bestowed much more attention on the intellectual than on the emotional side of his nature, he knew as little of the potentialities of feeling as many another man knows of the complex spirit within him. He only knew that day by day it was becoming more difficult for him to remember what existence had been like before this exquisite presence entered it: before he heard the lovely music of her voice, and felt the compelling charm that emanated from her in every word, glance, and gesture.

And meanwhile the halcyon bird of classic tradition was surely brooding over the waters during these

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idyllic days of summer sailing; for the Atlantic, which rarely fails to give its voyagers at least one rough tossing, remained throughout this voyage as calm as an inland lake. Hence it was one of those record trips which the captains of transatlantic liners love to make; and the day came too soon for all but the most impatient when the passengers knew that a few hours more would bring the ship within sight of Sandy Hook.

Their last evening at sea was made memorable by one of the most beautiful sunsets of the voyage. As the great ball of flaming light dropped into the ocean, there followed a resplendency of glory which filled the whole western sky, and seemed to open the gates of some enchanted world of unimaginable beauty, where clouds like shreds of angels' plumage were floating on depths of dazzling gold and red that burned like the heart of a sacrificial fire. Flung far and wide over sea and sky, the wonderful illumination mounted to the zenith, and was reflected in softened but exquisite tints of color in the eastern heaven.

It was toward this part of the wide scene that Moira had turned her face when Lyndon came to her side, as she stood leaning against the rail, gazing, with the wistfulness he had often before seen in her eyes, toward the distant east.

"You always look backward, rather than forward," he said abruptly. "Even this magical sunset cannot draw your eyes from the east."

The eyes of which he spoke turned on him, as she said:

"I look toward the east because my heart is there.

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Beyond that horizon lies everything for which I care in the world."

He was tempted to ask what that "everything" included; but she had in all their intercourse been so reticent about herself, her past life and circumstances, that he did not venture to put the direct question. Instead, he asked:

"Will you not for once look toward the west, and try to fancy that you may find something there for which you may also learn to care?"

But she shook her head, as her gaze went back to the east.

"The west holds nothing for me," she answered. "All that I love is yonder, beneath the eastern horizon."

He leaned beside her silently for a moment, gazing also at the beautiful tinted sky, and wondering where and with whom her thoughts were. Presently he said:

"But since you have left behind all of which you speak, doesn't it strike you that there may be wisdom in looking forward, instead of backward? Doesn't the adventure of the unknown appeal to you?"

She shook her head again.

"No," she replied, "the adventure of the unknown has ceased to allure me; though I am sure that there is wisdom in looking forward instead of backward. For as farthest west becomes east again, so I may find the past in the future. That sounds rather mystical perhaps, but you know that if we kept on sailing around the world, we should reach at last, not America, but——"

"Tripoli?"

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He did not understand why she gave him such a startled glance,—a glance as startled as that she had given him on the day of their first meeting.

"What do you know of—Tripoli?" she asked quickly.

"Only that it was the home of the Princess Far-Away," he answered, smiling. "And it seemed natural that you should be thinking of her place of dreams."

"Oh, the Princess Far-Away!" (He saw that she was oddly relieved.) "No, I was not thinking of her, and I had forgotten for the moment that Tripoli was her home." Then, as her eyes sought again the eastern verge, beyond which lay the golden sands and waving palms of the world's last stronghold of mystery and romance, she asked: "Have you ever been in Northern Africa?"

"Never," he answered; "although I was almost tempted to go there a few days ago in search of a man who has gone to Morocco."

"To Morocco!" She repeated the words as if liking to linger on their syllables. "That is a country where I should like to go."

"From all accounts, it is not a very desirable place to visit just now," he said. "Every one to whom I spoke in Paris dissuaded me strongly from going there."

"If you had done so," she said, "you would certainly have had a new and interesting experience, whether or not you found the man of whom you were in search."

"But why should you wish to be there?" he asked. "Do you know the country?"

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"Not Morocco," she answered; "but when I was a child we once spent a winter in Algiers on account of my father's health; and I recall the time as a long dream of romance, in which I lived, moved and breathed in the atmosphere of the 'Arabian Nights.' I was always an imaginative child, and those Oriental scenes and people made an ineffaceable impression upon me. Oh, I wish" (she caught her breath),—"I wish I were there now, watching the sun set over the desert, instead of over this wide waste of waters that lies between me and—Africa!"

"Don't wish that!" he said earnestly. "Of course, there will be nothing to excite your imagination in the same way in America. It will seem very crude and realistic as compared to the Orient, for there's not the faintest glamour about anything there; but you may find some things and people to like,—at least I hope so."

"I have already found some American people to like," she said, with her thoughts again traveling farther away than he could guess.

"The outward aspects of American life will probably repel you at first," he went on. "It's plain that you are keenly alive to everything poetic and artistic, and I've observed that people of that kind don't usually like America."

"No, they don't like it," she agreed. "I have known American artists and writers who live in Paris because they find there an atmosphere which they say they cannot find at home."

Paul Lyndon frowned.

"And for the sake of that atmosphere—to gratify their æsthetic sensibilities and tastes—many of those

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people turn their backs on their duties at home, and forget everything but their own selfish inclinations," he said. "I am often tempted to think that what is called the artistic temperament is a curse to its possessor."

But he was not prepared for the flash of fire in Moira's glance as she turned it on him again.

"Does it never occur to you that such judgments are very narrow-minded?" she asked. "It is an intolerant spirit, rather than the artistic temperament, which is a curse to its possessor, in my opinion."

He stared at her for an instant, flushed and silent. Then he said, with a humility of tone which contrasted strangely with his usual self-assurance:

"Perhaps you are right. I have sometimes told myself the same thing; for I know that I have a spirit which is very intolerant of self-indulgence and neglect of duty."

"How can you venture to decide what constitutes self-indulgence and neglect of duty in others?" she demanded, unappeased by the humility of his acknowledgment.

"It's generally easy enough to tell," he answered. "It is part of the solidarity of human life that no man lives or acts for himself alone; and when one sees the suffering caused by those who have followed the impulses of their artistic temperaments to the forgetfulness of their duties—well, then it is difficult *not* to be intolerant."

Something in his tone—a note of strong though repressed feeling—held her silent; and after a moment's pause he went on:

"I feel more keenly on this subject because there

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has lately been brought home to me an example of the selfishness on one side and suffering on the other, of which I have spoken. You may not think me so narrow-minded in judging the artistic temperament if I tell you a story of family trouble,—the story which was the cause of my going abroad, and which nearly carried me to Morocco——”

But Moira lifted her hand with a quick, deterring gesture.

“Please don’t!” she said hurriedly. “I cannot bear to hear stories of trouble; and—and perhaps I should apologize for calling you narrow-minded and intolerant. No doubt you have had reason to distrust the artistic temperament; but you know—do you not?—our French saying, *‘Tout comprendre, c’est tout pardonner’*? Surely we should try to understand as much as possible, in order to be able to pardon!”

Notwithstanding the pleading sweetness of her voice, again Lyndon frowned a little.

“Comprehension does not seem to me necessarily to entail pardon,” he said. “It is quite possible to comprehend things which one has no inclination to pardon. This story of which I’ve spoken now,—I should like to tell it to you, in order that you may understand my attitude.”

“I think that I understand your attitude perfectly,” she answered. “But I am wondering whether you may not some day find that it is not only the artistic temperament which needs comprehension and pardon.”

Then, without giving him time for reply, she moved away to join Mrs. Granger, who was advancing toward them.

CHAPTER XII

"AND so Paul has got back!" Governor Harcourt said, as he folded the telegram which Lyndon had sent to his mother on landing in New York. "He has made a quick trip."

"Yes; I don't think he can have been more than a week on the other side," Mrs. Lyndon agreed. "I wonder he didn't stay longer. It hardly seems worth while to have crossed the ocean to have come back again so immediately."

"Paul is not one to waste time," his uncle observed. "He went over on business, you know."

"I know; but that needn't have prevented his staying long enough to have done something else."

"What else?"

"Well" (Mrs. Lyndon took her courage in her hands), "I thought he would have seen Royall."

"I haven't a doubt but that he has seen Royall," her brother answered. "He didn't tell me that he had any such intention, but I know him so well that I was as sure of his motive for going abroad as if he *had* told me. The business of the Barclay estate was a good excuse, but he really went over to see Royall. I was quite certain of that."

"And yet you said nothing!"

"Why should I have said anything? There are times when words are unnecessary."

Mrs. Lyndon sighed. She knew well that there were many such times with her brother and her son, and the knowledge was one of the trials of her life.

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Herself expansive by nature, she could never cease to feel injured and irritated by the habitual reticence of the two men with whom she was most closely associated. It was exasperating now to be told that her son had gone abroad on an errand in which she would have been so deeply interested without uttering one word of his intention to her; and that her brother had divined this intention, and had also maintained silence. But long experience had taught her that remonstrance was useless, so after a moment she remarked, a little sarcastically:

"I only hope that Paul won't think words are unnecessary when he comes to-morrow. For if he has seen Royall, I shall be desperately anxious to hear what he has learned about his marriage."

Governor Harcourt's face hardened.

"I am quite sure that you will hear nothing that can be of satisfaction to you," he said. "And, for myself, I should prefer to hear nothing at all."

"But you won't refuse to listen to what he has to tell!" she urged eagerly.

"No, I shall not refuse to listen; but I anticipate nothing good in his report, and I advise you not to anticipate anything, either."

"But at least one will be glad to know something with certainty!" she cried. "Oh, I hope you are not mistaken about his having seen Royall! It would be an awful disappointment to learn now that he hadn't done so."

Her brother regarded her with a glance of mingled pity and impatience.

"I am sorry that I told you anything about it," he said. "It is always a mistake to tell things. But

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at least you haven't long to wait for Paul's arrival, since he says that he will be here to-morrow."

With this he walked out of the room, to avoid further discussion of the subject; and Mrs. Lyndon was left to meditate on the general unsatisfactoriness of human relations, as well as on the extreme doubtfulness of hearing anything that she desired to hear from her son on the morrow.

Nevertheless, it was with intense pleasure that she greeted the young man who sprang out of the car, that had been sent to the station to meet him, when it drew up before the portico where Governor Harcourt and herself were waiting the next day.

"My dear boy," she exclaimed, as he embraced her, "how glad I am to see you! And how dreadfully sunburned you are! But, of course, that's natural, since you are just off the sea. Did you have a pleasant voyage?"

"One of the pleasantest I have ever known," Lyndon answered, as he turned to shake hands with his uncle. "I hope you are well, sir," he said, painfully struck by the change that, even since he saw it last, had been wrought by mental suffering in the face before him.

"Oh, well enough!" Governor Harcourt answered, a little impatiently. "Never mind about me. You are looking much better for the trip,—though you didn't make a long stay on the other side."

"I found that there was no need of staying," Lyndon replied. Then, reading the anxiety so plainly written in the two pairs of eyes that gazed at him: "Let us go in," he added, "and I'll tell you both all that there is to tell about what I did over there."

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A few minutes later, when they sat down together in his mother's pleasant sitting-room, Lyndon said:

"Of course, you know that I went abroad for the purpose of seeing Royall."

"I guessed as much," his uncle answered. "I couldn't imagine what end you expected to accomplish by going, but I was willing to trust you."

"It is not worth while to tell you all that I hoped to accomplish," Lyndon went on; "for I have to report failure to accomplish anything——"

"I expected that," said Governor Harcourt; but he paled perceptibly, nevertheless.

"Because," Lyndon ended, "I was unable to see either Royall or the woman he married."

A flush of anger mounted to his uncle's face.

"I cannot imagine why you should have wanted to see *her*!" he said sharply.

"O Gilbert!" Mrs. Lyndon remonstrated. "Since Royall has married her, we must surely wish to know what she is like."

"It is a subject on which I have not the faintest curiosity," her brother told her. "Paul ought to be aware of that."

"I am aware of it," Lyndon replied; "and it was not at all to gratify any one's curiosity that I wanted to see her, but for an entirely different reason. What I had in mind," he said, looking from one face to the other of those before him, "was to find if there was any possibility of arranging for a separation between Royall and this woman."

"Paul!" his mother exclaimed.

But Lyndon put out his hand and touched hers, that was near him on the arm of her chair.

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"Be quiet, mother," he said gently, "until I have finished. You see, sir" (he spoke to his uncle), "I was thinking of the way matters were arranged when young Escott made a fool of himself by marrying a chorus-girl over in New York. If you remember, his father brought pressure, chiefly financial, to bear on him,—sent him off to sea in a yacht, so that he couldn't be reached, paid a large sum of money to the girl in question, and there was no contest to the divorce that was presently granted."

Governor Harcourt nodded.

"I remember all about the case," he said. "I've thought of it several times. But, you see, that Escott boy was much younger than Royall, and his father was able to control matters as I am not able."

"You are more able than you think, perhaps," Lyndon said. "Money always means power, and you would be willing to spend money to accomplish such a separation, would you not?"

"I would be willing to spend the half of my fortune," the older man answered.

"I was sure of it. Well, what I wanted to do, then, was to see this woman, and to find out if she were open to such an offer as was made to the New York chorus-girl. If she is the adventuress we have assumed her to be, she would be open to it, when she learned that there was no hope of your ever recognizing such a marriage."

"Paul!" his mother cried again, "I—I'm ashamed of you!"

"You needn't be, mother, when what I am trying to do is to bring Royall back to you, to the home where he belongs, and to the duties that await him,"

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Lyndon said simply. "He *must* be brought back—I saw that when I was here the last time,—and the only way to bring him back is to eliminate the woman who would be utterly out of place here——"

"Who shall never, God helping me, set her foot here!" his uncle interrupted sternly. "If she cannot be eliminated, Paul, this house shall be yours. I have settled that."

"It was because I knew such an arrangement was in your mind that I have been so anxious to bring Roy back," Lyndon said. "He is the last Harcourt, and no one else can take his place. I hardly hoped to influence him immediately," he went on; "but I thought I could learn what the chances were for the future, what his attitude was, and what the character of the woman may be."

Governor Harcourt leaned forward with an expression of painful interest.

"Well," he said, "and what did you learn?"

The young man flung out his hands with a despairing gesture.

"I learned nothing," he answered,—"*absolutely* nothing; for I was not able to see either of them."

"Why not?"

"Because Roy had gone to Morocco, as illustrating artist to some French press expedition; and the woman had vanished from Paris, leaving no trace behind."

His uncle sank back in his chair and stared at him silently for a moment.

"Why, this looks as if there had been some difficulty between them already!" he commented.

Lyndon shook his head.

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"I'm afraid not," he said. "I have had a little light on the situation from an unexpected source. In London I met Mrs. Granger (Emily Covington, you know), and she told me that she had seen Royall a few days earlier in Paris—I missed him very narrowly, you perceive,—and had heard from him the whole story of his marriage, and why he was going to Morocco. The reason could be summed up in three words—want of money."

"Ah!" It was a gasp from Mrs. Lyndon. "I knew he must need money!" she said reproachfully to her brother.

"I was quite sure of it," he returned grimly. "Go on, Paul! What else did Emily Granger tell you?"

"She told me," Paul went on, "that she had seen Mrs. Royall Harcourt, and had found her fascinating."

"What!" his mother cried eagerly. "Do you mean that Emily Granger found her fascinating?"

"Nothing less, it appeared, from the manner in which she spoke of her."

"Gilbert, do you hear that?"

"I hear it perfectly, Margaret. Emily was always a foolish girl, and I don't regard her opinion as of any importance. Go on, Paul."

"There's little else to tell," Lyndon said. "I hurried over to Paris, but Royall had gone to Morocco, and his wife had disappeared so completely that I was unable to obtain any clue to her whereabouts."

"What was the meaning of that? Why should she have disappeared?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"That's the mystery," he said. "Mrs. Granger

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was very angry when I suggested that the right kind of people don't disappear mysteriously and leave no address behind; but it's true, nevertheless."

"Of course, it's true. Only an adventuress would do such a thing."

"You might give her the benefit of a doubt," Mrs. Lyndon suggested, "since you don't know anything about her motives."

"That is true," her son acknowledged. "We don't know anything about them, but disappearance has always a very suspicious look. Well, I'm sorry to say that's all I have to tell. I couldn't follow Royall to Morocco—I hadn't the time, even if I could have penetrated where he has gone,—so there was nothing to do but to come home, having failed in everything I desired to accomplish."

He spoke dispiritedly; but Governor Harcourt leaned forward, with a gleaming moisture in his eyes.

"You haven't failed in one thing," he said, "and that is in proving, if proof were needed, what a true friend you are. There are not many men who would have gone on such an errand—to make an effort to bring back one whose continued absence would be a distinct advantage to yourself."

Lyndon flushed.

"You couldn't think that I would ever regard Roy's absence in that light," he said.

"I have never thought so," his uncle answered; "and I am more than ever convinced now that you wouldn't regard it in that light. I don't consider that you have failed in your efforts as completely as you think, either," he added. "You have given me hope of what may be after a while accomplished—I

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mean the ending of this marriage,—and I haven't had *that* before. I think there must have been some strong reason, besides need of money, that induced Royall to leave the woman to whom he had not been married a month and go so far away as Morocco; and when his strange absence is coupled with her strange disappearance, I can't but hope that he has discovered something which will make him willing to listen to a suggestion of divorce."

"Gilbert, I am astonished at you!" his sister exclaimed. "You have always said that you didn't believe in divorce."

"And I don't believe in it now," Governor Harcourt told her, "except in a case of this kind."

The sunshine of late afternoon was lying long and golden over the beautiful, well-kept grounds that surrounded the fine old house which had sheltered the Harcourts for close upon two hundred years, when Paul Lyndon found his mother established in her favorite post-siesta place—a broad, pillared veranda on the side of the house, shaded from the sun and overlooking the garden, with its wealth of flowers and tall hedges of box.

He could not but think, as he approached, what a charming picture she made, as she sat in her soft gray gown, with a trifle of a lace cap on her still abundant hair, crocheting with delicate ivory hands, while her eyes turned constantly toward the spot where she expected him to appear. When he did appear, she smiled.

"I began to think your uncle was going to monopolize you altogether," she said. "I couldn't complain;

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for he has been so depressed, and your coming has been such a pleasure to him. But I have felt that I'd like to see a little of you myself."

"And I have been wanting very much to have a chance to talk to you," Lyndon said, as he sat down in one of the large wicker chairs that furnished the pleasant spot. "But it has been rather hard to get away from Uncle Gilbert; and he is so low in spirits that it seemed a charity to do anything one could to divert him."

"You are the only person who has power to do anything," his mother told him. "Nobody else can divert his mind for a moment. He seems to be brooding over Royall's conduct, and getting more angry with him all the time. O Paul, I *did* hope you would bring some good news when you came!"

"I wish I could have done so," Paul answered, sighing a little; "though I can't really see what good news you expected me to bring."

"I hardly know myself," she said; "but this state of affairs is dreadful. 'It's exactly as if Royall were dead, and I—I feel sometimes as if I couldn't bear it, as if I must set out and find him myself.'"

"It was because I saw you felt that way that I went to find him," Lyndon replied. "I did my best and I failed, and there's nothing more to be done at present, as Uncle Gilbert and I have been agreeing; so would you mind not talking about it any more just now? I should like a little rest from the subject, and I have something concerning myself that I want to tell you."

"Concerning yourself!" Mrs. Lyndon echoed, with a start. It was so unlike Paul to wish to talk of him-

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self that she had an immediate foreboding of fresh trouble. "What is it?" she asked apprehensively. "What have you been doing?"

"Not robbing a bank," he answered, with a laugh, "nor yet marrying an actress. But I have fallen in love."

"Paul! *You!*"

"My dear mother, is there any reason why I should be exempt from the common fate of man?"

"No reason at all," his mother agreed, "except that you have always been so different in that respect from most young men. I never heard of your being in love before."

"I never have been," he said briefly.

"And that it should come now—when we've just had such a dreadful shock about Róyall, who always was falling in love—makes it seem more—er—astounding," she went on. "But, of course, I'm glad, if you have fallen in love with the right woman. That's the important thing—that she shall be the right woman. You couldn't do such a thing as Royall has done, I'm sure."

"You may be quite sure of it," he told her with decision. "Set your mind at rest on that point."

"My dear boy, it doesn't need to be set at rest. I have such confidence in your judgment that I'm certain you have chosen wisely—some one whom we can approve and love. Who is she? Do I know her?"

Through the deep tan that the sea had put upon his face, it was to be seen that Lyndon flushed slightly.

"No," he replied, "you don't know her. You have

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never seen her, though I hope that you will see her soon."

"But you haven't told me who she is. What is her name?"

"Her name," he said, "will mean nothing to you. She is a Miss Fortescue, and you have never even heard of her before. I met her with Mrs. Granger. We have just crossed the ocean together——"

"Oh, if she is a friend of Emily Granger's——"

"She is," he said hastily, "her companion and secretary, though I think also her friend. In fact, I am sure of this; for Mrs. Granger speaks of her most enthusiastically." He paused a moment, and then said in the deepest tone of his deep, grave voice: "If you really have confidence in my judgment, mother, you will believe that she is an altogether exquisite person as well as extraordinarily beautiful."

"Oh, beautiful!" Mrs. Lyndon's tone had a bitter note. "That is all a man thinks of when he is in love. But there are so many other things to be thought of. There's family. Do you know anything about her people?"

"Nothing at all," he confessed. "But to see her is to be assured that her people are all that they should be. No such flower blooms from any but a fine stock."

"Paul, you amaze me! I couldn't have imagined you talking or thinking in this way. It—it really sounds as if you had lost your senses. To fall in love—you!—with an utter stranger, a girl of whom you know nothing, except that she is in an inferior social position, and whose antecedents and relatives may be anything that is dreadful! I don't see how you

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can reconcile it with any of your past ideas or standards."

"I haven't tried to reconcile it," the young man said quietly. "I haven't thought of my past ideas and standards at all; but I recognize that I was a good deal of a fool in judging matters of which I knew nothing."

"I always wished you would fall in love," his mother went on plaintively. "I believed it would do you good. But, of course, I always thought of some nice girl whom we would know and like."

"I know the kind of girl you mean," he said, smiling at her. "I know dozens of that girl, and I like her very much, but I couldn't fall in love with her in a century of association. I have made several new discoveries about myself lately, and the most important is that, astonishing as it seems, I have a great capacity for idealism. And so I have fallen in love, not with a nice girl, but with a Princess Far-Away."

"With *what*? Paul, I believe that you have absolutely lost your senses!"

"Not altogether," he told her; "though perhaps it sounds like it. Have you ever heard of 'La Princesse Lointaine,' a drama by Rostand, the man who wrote 'Chanticler,' you know?"

"The curious play all about chickens? No, I never heard of anything else he has written; and I don't see what a Far-Away Princess has to do with this girl you've fallen in love with."

"You'll understand perhaps when you see her. And this brings me to the point I had chiefly in view in speaking to you. I want you to see her. I want you and my uncle to know her, so that there will be

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no danger of giving you any such shock as Royall has given if—if she consents to marry me.”

“Have you asked her to do so?”

“Certainly not. There has not even been any approach to anything of the kind between us. There’s a singular atmosphere about her which makes one feel that it would be presumptuous to approach her too closely or too soon.” He looked out over the flower-set, sunlit garden, as if he saw the slender form of the Princess Far-Away. “She is not the kind of woman who falls like ripe fruit at a touch of a man’s hand,” he said. “She must be wooed before she is won—if, indeed, she is to be won at all. Of that I know absolutely nothing. I know only that she is the one woman in the world for me, and that I would rather spend my life in wooing her vainly than in winning any other.”

“Paul!” his mother gasped again.

And then she sat, silently staring at him. For truly this was a revelation, as wonderful as it was unexpected. She could hardly realize that it was indeed Paul, her grave, self-contained son, of whom she had often said sighingly that he had no “sentiment,” and who had at last fallen in love in such overwhelming fashion with a woman who was as strange to her, and to all that had heretofore made his life, as the fanciful Princess Far-Away of whom he spoke.

Presently he withdrew his eyes from their distant gaze over the garden, and, meeting her bewildered look, smiled again.

“*Madrecita*,” he said, “I am really not insane, though I am hardly surprised that you are inclined to

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think so. When you see Miss Fortescue you will understand better——”

“But when and how am I to see Miss Fortescue?” Mrs. Lyndon interrupted.

“I am coming to that,” he answered. “Mrs. Granger tells me that she is tired of gaiety and dissipation, and feels that she would like to be quiet for a time. So, instead of going to any fashionable resort for the rest of the summer, she is coming to her place near here to spend a few weeks, and Miss Fortescue will be with her.”

“Very well,” his mother said, with an air of resignation. “In that case, of course, I shall see her, and for your sake I will try to like her.”

“No trying will be necessary,” he somewhat rashly assured her.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE exquisite freshness of an early summer morning, full of beauty, and fragrance which rose like incense, as the long lances of sunlight pierced the dewy recesses of garden, meadow and woods, Moira stood at the open window of her chamber in the old family seat of the Covingtons, and looked out over a fair expanse of rolling country, stretching to blue distance, in the direction of Harcourt Manor. For when Mrs. Granger, on their arrival the evening before, brought her to her room, she had flung open this window and pointed outward with a dramatic gesture.

"Over there," she said, "is the fortress we have come to storm! Harcourt Manor lies three miles distant in that direction."

"So near!" Moira said. "And yet for me so far!" she added, sighing a little.

"I am certain that it will soon be near, rather than far for you," Mrs. Granger predicted confidently. "Meanwhile, you perceive how well placed we are, from a strategic point of view."

"I perceive that we could not be more delightfully placed from any point of view," Moira answered.

And she was more than ever of that opinion now, as, in the brilliant morning, she looked out over the beautiful grounds and widespreading landscape surrounding the house in which she found herself. It was one of the old colonial houses, of which there are many in the lower counties of Maryland, not so

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large and stately as its neighbor, Harcourt Manor, but spacious, dignified, and filled with that aroma of the past which breathes like a potpourri of rose leaves in places associated with generations that are gone. And this was the more apparent because the place had been practically deserted for many years; since neither Mrs. Granger, to whom it had fallen by inheritance, nor her husband, cared for country life. And it was only when the former had felt the need of a strategic base from which to conduct her campaign against Harcourt Manor that the recollection of the home of her childhood came to her like an inspiration.

So it was that the varied and rapidly succeeding impressions which Moira had received since her landing in America ended in a quiet old house, tranquilly seated in a green, smiling country. A wave of gratitude rose in her heart as she realized afresh how wonderfully she had been led by unexpected ways to this pleasant spot in Royall's own land, at the very door of Royall's home. The wonder of it was, indeed, so great that just now it hardly seemed to matter very much whether or not that door would open to her as Royall's wife. For Royall's sake it was desirable that it should do so; but for herself, she felt as if it were almost enough to have seen with her own eyes the fields and woods and skies that had been the familiar setting of his life during all its young years; to be able to look (even from afar) at the roof beneath which he had been born, and perhaps to meet face to face those nearest to him in blood and affection. Again she sent her wistful glance into the blue distance, as if seeking some glimpses of the roof-tree and chimneys there; then, murmuring softly the

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words of the Itinerary, "May he return to his home in peace, safety and joy!" she sank upon her knees, and, as she prayed, turned her face toward the distant east.

And that face seemed to hold the morning light so clearly reflected in it when a little later she joined Mrs. Granger and Leila at breakfast that the latter cried:

"You look as if you had heard some good news, Miss Fortescue!"

Moira smiled, as her eyes, in their luminous softness, met those of her hostess.

"Isn't it good news to find one's self in this charming place?" she asked. "I have seen nothing which I like so much since I reached America."

"I am glad that you like it," Mrs. Granger said. "Of course, it is the dearest place in the world to me; for my people have lived here ever since the first Covington came to the country, and I was born in this house and spent a happy childhood here."

"But you don't seem to care about living here now, mummy," Leila remarked. "I wish you would."

"When a woman is married, she must live where her husband desires," Mrs. Granger reminded her. "I think you'll like the entire country," she went on to Moira; "and we'll take a drive this afternoon to show it to you. I wish I could ask you to go out with me this morning, but I want to visit some of my old friends whom I haven't seen for a long time."

"Where are you going?" Leila inquired. "And why don't you wait for people to come to see you?"

"Because there are certain people to whom a spe-

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cial deference is due," her mother told her; "and one doesn't wait for them to come to see one."

Leila pursued her inquiries further:

"Who are those people?" she asked.

"Well, for example, the people at Harcourt Manor," Mrs. Granger answered. "I am going this morning to call on Mrs. Lyndon."

"May I go with you? I like going to Harcourt Manor. O Miss Fortescue, it's the loveliest place,—lovelier even than this! Mummy, may I go?"

"You may not," her mother replied, with decision. "I wish to see Mrs. Lyndon alone."

Leila looked disappointed.

"I could go into the garden while you talked," she said. "It's the nicest old garden ever was. Why do you want to see Mrs. Lyndon alone? Is it to talk about Mr. Royall Harcourt's marriage?"

"Leila!" The sharpness of the tone made Leila jump. "Unless you want to be sent to your room, don't venture to ask any more questions on subjects that don't concern you."

"Mummy!" Leila gasped. Her amazement at this unprecedented severity was so great that it almost moved Moira to laughter, although she had herself been startled almost to the jumping point by the last question. "I know that Mr. Royall Harcourt's marriage doesn't concern me," Leila proceeded after a moment, in an injured tone; "but everybody who came to see you in Baltimore talked about it. I was in the back drawing-room reading and I heard them. So why——"

"Leila, go upstairs!"

But here Moira interposed.

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"Pray, don't send her away, Mrs. Granger," she pleaded. "She simply doesn't understand, and I'm sure she will be quiet now."

"Of course, I'll be quiet," Leila said, in a still more injured tone; "but I don't see——"

She broke off, transfixed by her mother's glance, and subsided into silence and attention to her breakfast; while Mrs. Granger turned to Moira with an air of eager apology.

"You mustn't think that I tolerated mere gossip in the people who came to see me in Baltimore," she said. "I allowed them to talk, because it gave me a chance to set them right on some points."

"Dear Mrs. Granger, it was natural that they should talk," Moira said gently. "And I have no doubt you set them right."

"I set them right emphatically," Mrs. Granger repeated; "and I'm going on a like errand to-day. That isn't a very lucid sentence perhaps, but you'll understand what I mean."

"The sentence seems to me to be quite lucid," Moira replied; "and I understand perfectly what you mean. It is very good of you to undertake such an errand."

"It is an errand after my own heart," Mrs. Granger declared; "so I deserve no credit for goodness in undertaking it."

And this was true. It was an errand so entirely after her own heart that she had a sense of agreeable anticipation amounting almost to exhilaration as she drove a little later in her luxurious motor-car along the familiar country roads toward Harcourt Manor. The managing instinct, which was the strongest in-

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stinct of her nature, was gratified by the consciousness that she was about to play the part of a benevolent *dea ex m  china*, and bring happiness and reconciliation to her old friends. Of her power to do this she had not the slightest doubt, since all the strings rested in her capable hands and could be pulled at her pleasure; for, like most people of her disposition, she always forgot to allow for forces which she could not control, and which might upset the most carefully arranged plans.

Filled with serene self-confidence, therefore, she descended from her car at the portico of the Manor, was met at the door by a gray-haired servant, who called her "Miss Emily," inquired solicitously about her health and general welfare, and then showed her into the great, cool, dim drawing-room, where not even a piece of furniture had been moved within her recollection and where Mrs. Lyndon soon came to her.

"Well, Emily, I'm glad that you haven't forgotten entirely that you belong to this part of the country," the elder lady said, when, their greetings over, they sat down opposite each other. "I began to think we should never see you down here again."

"Oh, I couldn't forget my old home and my old friends!" Mrs. Granger deprecated. "I'm really devoted to both, and I have often meant to come back to Covertdale; but life, as one lives it in these days, is so exacting, and makes such demands on one, that it isn't always easy to do what one would like."

"I suppose not, when it means coming to a quiet country neighborhood," Mrs. Lyndon agreed, with a touch of sarcasm; "but you seem to find time to

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rush all over the world in the modern fashion. I understand that you are just back from England now."

"Yes; we go abroad nearly every summer; and, of course, the Coronation was a strong attraction to take us to London this year. We met Paul over there, you know."

"So he told me." A reserve came into Mrs. Lyndon's voice, which Mrs. Granger's quick ear caught, but to the true meaning of which she had no clue. As a matter of fact, the mother was thinking that it was to this woman, with her modern craze for rushing about the world, and picking up undesirable acquaintances, that she owed the blow of Paul's strange infatuation for an unknown foreign girl. But it was natural enough that Mrs. Granger, with her own mind full of Royall, should have attributed the change of tone to the thought of *him*, and seized the opportunity to open the subject.

"Did Paul tell you that I met Royall in Paris?" she asked.

"Yes, he told us that also," Mrs. Lyndon answered; "and I was glad to know that I would soon have an opportunity to see you and hear all about him, and—about the woman he has married."

"I was sure you would want to hear, and that is why I've lost no time in coming to see you," Mrs. Granger said eagerly. "And I hope, dear Mrs. Lyndon, that your mind is more open than I found Paul's to be, when it was a question of Royall's wife."

Mrs. Lyndon looked distressed.

"I am sorry to say that Paul, like my brother, is very prejudiced on that subject," she said. "They

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are both certain that the woman is of a class and kind that we can never recognize."

"Now, there is where I have no patience at all with Paul," Mrs. Granger broke in. "I say nothing about the Governor, because I haven't talked with him. But I have told Paul what my judgment is of Mrs. Royall Harcourt, and it is simply outrageous that he refuses to believe me."

"He thinks that you are judging her too favorably because you are anxious to think well of her, and because you are impulsive——"

"I am *not* impulsive!" Mrs. Granger pounded the arm of her chair to emphasize the assertion. "I have never been mistaken in judging a woman in my life; and if you have any respect for my opinion, you will believe me when I tell you that I've never seen a more charming young creature than the girl whom Royall has married."

"My dear, I'm only too glad to believe you," Mrs. Lyndon assured her. "It has nearly broken my heart to think that Royall has ruined his life and cut himself off from his family by marrying some dreadful adventuress. Now, tell me all about her, and why Royall has gone away and she has disappeared mysteriously; for Paul says all that looks very badly."

"He has no right to say anything of the kind; for I told him explicitly and exactly why Royall has gone to Morocco and why his wife preferred to leave Paris, and now I'll tell you all about it."

This she proceeded to do. Her meeting with Royall and what he said, her visit to his wife, and how immediately and completely she was charmed with the latter, were described in full detail; while of

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Moira's personal attractions she spoke with an enthusiasm which impressed her listener deeply. For Mrs. Lyndon knew that, however impulsive Emily Granger might be, she was not in the least likely to make a mistake in a matter of this kind. Her social instinct was unerring, and could be especially depended upon in judging one of her own sex. Therefore, when she declared of Royall's wife, "She is all you could possibly desire," Mrs. Lyndon accepted the verdict with a great sense of relief.

"Oh, if you will only tell my brother all this, and make him believe it, what a great thing it will be!" she cried fervently.

"I'll tell him; don't have any doubt about that," Mrs. Granger assured her. "But as for making him believe it—I may fail there, if he is as prejudiced as Paul."

"You'll find him quite as much so," Mrs. Lyndon admitted, with a sigh; "but perhaps he may listen to *you*."

"If he doesn't, we must find other means to convince him," Mrs. Granger remarked cheerfully. "I don't despair at all about the Governor; but as for Paul—well, I'm really too much provoked with him to care whether he is convinced or not."

"I hardly know what to make of Paul," his mother confessed. "He has surprised me very much by his conduct in this matter. I was shocked when I heard that he had gone abroad to try and separate Royall from his wife, and I was glad that he was not able to see him."

"It is most fortunate that he didn't see him. I

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don't believe Royall would ever forgive such a suggestion."

"And Paul seems strange in—other respects," Mrs. Lyndon went on, with the same tone of reserve that had been in her voice before coming into it again. She paused a moment, and then: "I'd like for you to see Gilbert as soon as possible," she said, with an apparent change of subject; "but he is not at home to-day. Can't you come over to luncheon to-morrow?"

"I'll be delighted to do so," Mrs. Granger answered promptly.

"And—have you any one staying with you?"

"Why," with a fine carelessness, "no one at all in the way of a guest. I came down to be quiet for a while, and so I have nobody with me but Leila, and my—er—companion and secretary, Miss Fortescue."

"Paul mentioned that you had a companion and secretary," Mrs. Lyndon remarked, with carelessness equal to her own; "and that she is a very attractive girl."

"She is one of the most attractive I have ever known."

"Then suppose you bring her over with you to-morrow? Gilbert likes attractive girls, you know."

Even Mrs. Granger's self-possession hardly saved her from gasping audibly. This was beyond her utmost hopes, that, without any necessity for management or manœuvring, the door of the Manor should be opened, and Moira invited to enter as a guest. And the invitation was due to Lyndon's description of her! That added the last touch of irony. "How

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perfectly delicious!" she thought to herself, while she said aloud:

"I know that the Governor likes attractive girls, and that he is always delightful to them. I'm sure Miss Fortescue will be glad to come, and I'll be glad to show her this fine old place. You see, foreigners are apt to think that we haven't anything old in America."

"I wonder that you should have preferred a foreigner to one of your own people for such a position," Mrs. Lyndon said in a tone of disapproval which she was unable to repress. "Do you know anything of this girl's antecedents?"

"I know all about them," Mrs. Granger answered, with a sense of astonishment at the turn the conversation had taken. "She is of very good family, and is most beautifully educated and accomplished; but her parents are both dead, and so it has been necessary for her to—er—find work to do. I consider myself most fortunate to have met her, and you will think so, too, when you see her."

"Oh, I'm not generally enthusiastic about strangers!" Mrs. Lyndon said a little bitterly; "but one has to make the best of things sometimes." Then, to cover this enigmatic sentence, she added hastily: "I shall expect you and Miss Fortescue, then, to-morrow; and I hope you may succeed in making my brother hear reason about Royall's marriage."

"It will not be my fault if I don't succeed," Mrs. Granger assured her, as she rose to take leave.

She drove home in a state of excitement difficult to describe, and as soon as she saw Moira:

"My dear," she cried, "some higher power must

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be managing your affairs, for the way things continue to happen is positively uncanny. I bring you an invitation—an entirely unsolicited invitation—from Mrs. Lyndon for luncheon at the Manor to-morrow. What do you think of that?"

What Moira thought of it was not easy for her to say; for a minute she could only stare at the speaker, and then she asked:

"How did it come about?"

Mrs. Granger flung out her hands in a gesture expressive of absolute inability to offer any explanation.

"It didn't come about through me," she said. "That's all I know. I had determined to be very cautious and diplomatic in introducing you to the notice of any one at Harcourt Manor, and I even laid strict injunction upon myself not to mention your name on this first visit. But Mrs. Lyndon herself spoke of you, said Paul had described you as charming, and asked me to bring you to luncheon to-morrow. I was utterly astonished, but managed to say that I was sure you would be glad to go."

"The question is, have I a right to go?" Moira said slowly. "You see, this invitation isn't given to *me*, and I am quite sure that nothing would be farther from Mrs. Lyndon's intention than to give it to me."

"That is true," Mrs. Granger answered. "But you came here for the purpose of meeting Royall's people, and if at the first chance—an almost miraculous chance—to do so, you draw back, you might as well have stayed in Paris."

"But don't you understand?" Moira asked. "It

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is true that I came here hoping to meet Royall's people; but I have always thought of the meeting as occurring accidentally, and on neutral ground, as it were. I have never thought of forcing my way into a house which is closed against me."

"Have you forced your way? Have *I* forced it for you, or made the slightest attempt to do so? The door of Harcourt Manor has opened to you from within, and the hand which has opened it is Paul Lyndon's."

A flush mounted to Moira's face. "I would rather not owe the opening of that door to Paul Lyndon," she said. "I learned to like him better than I expected; but I cannot forget in what manner he has desired, and still desires, to act toward me——"

"Nevertheless," Mrs. Granger interrupted, "you made a great step when you charmed him. In the first place, it was a distinct triumph; for he is not easily charmed; and, in the second place, as I told you on the *Mauretania*, his opinion has more weight at Harcourt Manor than that of any one else. Already it has opened the door for you, and if you refuse to take advantage of this opening, I shall lose patience with you."

"You mustn't do that," Moira said. "For surely you can see that I am longing to take advantage of the opening, and yet something tells me that Royall might think I lowered his dignity, as well as my own, by going to his father's house in disguise."

"Royall thought that you lowered his dignity by coming to America in disguise," Mrs. Granger reminded her. "We decided that, for the sake of the end in view, the risk should be taken; and the only

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question now is, will you be brave enough to go on and gain the end which will justify the risk?"

"Oh, if bravery were all that was required," Moira exclaimed, "I think I could be brave enough for anything!"

"Then be brave enough for this," Mrs. Granger told her. "Don't let your heart—for I'm certain it isn't your courage—fail for fear of Royall's disapproval. Royall is very far away, and you are here to take or lose the chance which is offered you. Remember that it is a chance to open the door of his home, not for yourself, but for him. And there's no other way than this to open that door. Royall will never return to the Manor without you, and you can never hope to convince Governor Harcourt that you are what you are unless you show yourself to him. Now, you can't show yourself to him under your own name; for he would refuse to meet you. So the only alternative is to meet him, as you have planned, under another name——"

"But I have not planned to meet him under his own roof," Moira interposed.

"And why not?" the other demanded. "Isn't his own roof the best under which to meet him? Don't forget that you have a right to be there. Royall's wife has a place in Royall's home. Go and win it!"

"I will!" Moira said, as solemnly as if she were pledging herself.

CHAPTER XIV

WHEN the time came the next day for the visit to Harcourt Manor, Mrs. Granger was moved to equal astonishment and admiration by the absence of any outward signs of nervousness in Moira. She herself was aware of nerves that were, as she expressed it, "like fiddle-strings"; but the girl who appeared at the hour appointed, in a Parisian toilette which brought out all the grace and distinction of her personality, was absolutely calm in manner and bearing; though there was, no doubt, some inward fire of excitement, which showed in the color of her cheeks, the light of her eyes, and lent a touch of extraordinary vividness to her beauty. Nevertheless, the chief impression which she made was of complete self-possession,—a self-possession so tranquil and so assured that, as the tall, slender figure came down the staircase, Mrs. Granger, who was waiting in the hall below, exclaimed involuntarily:

"My dear, you look like a princess!"

And then Leila, standing by, clapped her hands.

"A Far-Away Princess!" she cried. "*That* is what you are like, Miss Fortescue!"

Miss Fortescue gave her a brilliant smile.

"That is what I feel myself, *chérie*," she said. "I come, you see, from afar, and I am keenly conscious of my foreignness in many ways."

"You needn't be conscious of it in any way that matters," Mrs. Granger assured her. "It seems only to give you an exotic flavor that is exquisite. Now,

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shall we go? The car is waiting, and punctuality should be a virtue of princesses, as well as of princes."

"I think Mrs. Lyndon might have asked you to bring me," Leila remarked injuredly, as she followed them out to the side of the car. "I'd like to see Miss Fortescue at the Manor."

Moira bent and kissed her.

"Wish me good fortune—that I may please them," she said softly.

"You couldn't help pleasing them," Leila declared. "I'm sure they never saw anybody as lovely before."

"You have certainly a whole-hearted admirer in Leila," Mrs. Granger laughed, as they drove away. "And I quite agree with her. You can't help pleasing them, for a fairy stood by your cradle and gave you the power of winning hearts. It is a wonderful gift, but sometimes a dangerous one."

Moira turned her eyes on the speaker with a slightly startled expression.

"I wonder if it will ever prove dangerous to me?" she said. "I should be sorry to think so."

"You are fortunate if you've never found it dangerous hitherto," Mrs. Granger answered. "I'm rather surprised that you haven't, and I'm afraid you won't go through life without making the discovery. Charm is a woman's greatest gift, but her greatest danger also. And you possess it in a superlative degree. I fancy it was to that as much as to your talent that you owed your success on the stage."

"Something of the kind was said of me," Moira admitted; "but I rather resented it, for it seemed to subordinate the artist to the woman."

"And you did not like that?"

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"I did not like what it implied."

"It implied the truth. You are artist to your finger-tips—no one could look at you and doubt that,—but you are still more a woman; and what you have given up for the sake of a man proves it."

Moira sighed a little.

"What I have given up matters little," she said; "but what I have cost him,—it is that which lies heavy on my heart."

"There is no reason why it should do so," her friend said stoutly. "He counts the cost little for what he has gained,—I know that; and, little or great, you are going to make it up to him."

"Am I?" The eyes were softly bright now, as Moira laughed. "If 'making it up to him' means that I am going to win back for him what he has lost through me, I hope that you are a true prophet."

"I haven't a doubt that I am," Mrs. Granger returned confidently.

And then silence fell, as the car rolled swiftly over the smooth roads, through a country smiling in rich summer beauty, until Mrs. Granger suddenly laid her hand on her companion's arm.

"Here is the Manor," she said. "I didn't bring you along this way when we were driving yesterday afternoon, because I wanted you to have your first sight of the place to-day. It is a fine old house—for America,—isn't it?"

It was certainly a fine old house which Moira saw before her, crowning a gentle eminence, that sloped away on all sides into wide cultivated lands and shadowy woods,—a large, rosy-brick mansion of Palladian architecture, with pillared portico, and many win-

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dows, white-edged and crossbarred, set like a garnet on the green enamel of its tree-shaded lawn and box-hedged gardens. Through wide-open iron gates their chauffeur turned, and drove the car, lessening speed and purring softly, around a sweeping driveway, until it came to a noiseless halt before the portico, on which there now appeared an erect, white-haired man, who made haste to descend the steps and open the door of the car for them.

"My dear Governor, how delightful to see you again!" Mrs. Granger cried, as, greeting her warmly, he helped her out; and then she turned to the girl behind her. "This is my friend, Miss Fortescue," she told him. "Myra, let me introduce Governor Harcourt."

The smoothness and carelessness—just sufficient carelessness—with which the introduction was made did her credit; but her heart was beating fast as she realized, almost for the first time, the full audacity of her act, and the dramatic significance of the moment. "Dramatic" was the word, she thought; for the picture she would never forget—the graceful figure of the girl, pausing for an instant on the step of the car; and the handsome, stately old man, his blue eyes kindling with admiration as he looked at the beautiful face and took in the whole charm of the lovely presence.

"I am happy to meet Miss Fortescue," he said, as he assisted her to the ground with fine, old-fashioned courtesy.

The sound of his voice, the touch of his hand, were dreamlike to Moira; though she knew instantly that she liked him, and read correctly the approval of his

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glance. But it was difficult to make herself feel that this was Royall's father; that the hand which held hers in such kindly clasp had written the words which, although she was large-minded enough to forgive, she found herself unable to forget; and that the voice which greeted her so cordially had declared that she should never cross the threshold of his home. The last recollection almost overpowered her for a moment, with a return of the feeling which she had expressed to Mrs. Granger the day before,—a feeling of pride which revolted against entering under a false name the house which she would not be permitted to enter under her own. But, nerving herself afresh with the remembrance that by this means alone could she open the door of his home to Royall, she gave Governor Harcourt a smile which he thought enchanting, said a few words in her soft *voix d'or*, and walked by his side up the steps, across the flagged floor of the portico, and into a spacious hall, which rose to the second story, with a carved gallery across the end, where the staircase mounted.

Here Mrs. Lyndon met them; and Moira was quite sure that she had never seen any one more charming than this delicately fine gentlewoman, whose low-voiced welcome was full of cordial kindness. But it was probably because her perceptions were all so keenly on the alert that she was immediately aware of a particular scrutiny in the eyes that rested on her, which almost made her wonder whether Mrs. Lyndon suspected who she was. Presently, however, the curiosity behind the scrutiny was explained. After a flow of gentle remarks about the heat of the day, the dust of the roads, the advantages

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and disadvantages of motoring, Mrs. Lyndon turned to her.

"I have heard my son speak of you, Miss Fortescue," she said. "He seems to have enjoyed your companionship on his late voyage very much."

It was probably the significance of the voice more than the words which made Moira start. She had for the moment forgotten Paul Lyndon, and Mrs. Granger's assertion that it was his hand which had opened the door of Harcourt Manor to her; but his mother's tone seemed to bring the last statement back to her recollection, and involuntarily her own tone was a little the colder for it.

"We had a very pleasant voyage," she said; "and Mr. Lyndon's companionship added to its pleasure for all his friends, I think."

"It certainly did for ours," Mrs. Granger remarked quickly. "I have never known Paul more companionable," she added, turning to Governor Harcourt. "It is a pity that when he *can* be so agreeable, he doesn't oftener take the trouble to make himself so."

"I am not sure that I agree with you," Paul's uncle answered. "My experience is that men who take the trouble to make themselves agreeable don't usually take trouble to make themselves anything else. Now, that can't be said of Paul; for I've never known a more hard-working and ambitious fellow than he is."

"Too hard-working, too ambitious," Mrs. Granger murmured protestingly. "I'd like to have him remember that he is young; I'd like to see him play a little more."

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"We all have the defects of our qualities," Governor Harcourt reminded her; "and Paul, of course, has his; but they are such fine qualities that, personally, I am hardly aware of the defects. I wish" (unconsciously he sighed) "that there were more men like him in the world. But you may be satisfied about the playing," he added, with a sudden smile; "for he told me yesterday, when I saw him in town, that he is coming down to spend some time with us, and that he intends for once to leave all thought of work behind."

"I am glad to hear it," Mrs. Granger said; but in truth she felt a little startled. What did this resolution on Lyndon's part mean? Was he only leaving the work, which he hardly ever quitted, in order to give his mother and uncle the pleasure of his companionship in their saddened life; or did he suspect what purpose had brought her to the neighborhood of the Manor, and wish to be at hand to keep an eye upon her? This was unlikely. But a guilty conscience is apt to make its possessor uneasy; and it was a proof of how thoroughly she was convinced of his insensibility toward what are known as the tender emotions, that it did not occur to her that Moira's attraction might be the magnet which was drawing him.

Meanwhile Mrs. Lyndon was saying in her soft tones:

"Yes, when my brother returned yesterday evening he brought the good news that Paul will pay us a long visit. I am sorry he couldn't come in time to meet you and Miss Fortescue at luncheon to-day. He said he had business that would make it impossi-

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ble for him to get here, but he hopes to arrive before you leave this afternoon."

"Oh, well, if he doesn't, he knows the road to Covertdale!" Mrs. Granger laughed. "And we expect to be there for the next few weeks. I feel that I have neglected the dear old place too long," she said, again addressing her host; "and, then, I wanted to show Miss Fortescue that we have some country life—real old-fashioned country life, not a modern English imitation—in America."

"I'm afraid she will find it difficult to show you that," Governor Harcourt said, turning to Moira with his air of courtesy, and thinking what an exquisite young creature it was who looked at him with such brilliant eyes. "It used to be a delightful life that was lived on these old estates of Maryland, but it has passed away, and can hardly be said to exist any longer. Times have changed, conditions have changed; people want a kind of excitement and pleasure that cannot be found in quiet neighborhoods; and so the old places are deserted for cities in the winter and fashionable resorts in summer, and Europe, Asia, and Africa in between times——"

"My dear Governor, you are striking hard at me now!"

"I am not striking at any one, Emily; but you can't deny that what I say is true. You can show Miss Fortescue a few old houses, but you can't show her the life of the past, which will never return."

"At least there is a charming survival of it here," Moira said, as she glanced around the stately room in which they sat.

"Ah, yes" (his tone was a little bitter); "a sur-

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vival, but that is all! And it will not be even a survival very long."

"But may there not be a revival as well," she went on eagerly, "when people realize again how much life lacks that has no repose, no quietness in it?"

"Will they ever come to realize that?" Involuntarily the bitterness deepened in his tone. "I have no hope of it. Those who are filled with the modern spirit have lost all taste for repose. But if you like old things——"

"I adore them," she assured him, with a sincerity which could not be doubted.

"Then I shall have pleasure in showing you after luncheon some of the old things we have here."

"And Harcourt Manor is a treasure-house of eighteenth-century relics," Mrs. Granger assured her.

At this point luncheon was announced; and it seemed more than ever like a dream to Moira to find herself in the handsome dining-room, lined with old mahogany and old china, seated at table by the side of the courtly host, who looked at her so admiringly and talked to her with such evident pleasure. To Mrs. Granger it was quite clear that the Governor had completely yielded to the charm of this beautiful stranger; and she found herself marveling afresh at the girl's self-possession, her fine and perfect poise; not knowing that inward excitement acted like a strong stimulant, sustaining Moira under this ordeal, as it had often sustained her under that of the stage. And with the excitement there was also the sense of triumph, of success attained. For she read aright the homage (all the greater because involuntary) in Governor Harcourt's manner and regard—

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a homage with which the Princess Far-Away was very familiar,—and knew that she had justified Royall's choice, here in Royall's home.

And after luncheon the treasures of the house were exhibited to her,—old furniture, old silver, old portraits; and for all she had the right word,—the word of just appreciation and correct knowledge; so that Governor Harcourt's admiration steadily increased, and he wondered more and more where Emily Granger could have met this charming, high-bred girl, and how she had been led to become a companion. Surely the circumstances must have been very unkind which forced one so princess-like (as he instinctively recognized her to be) into such a position; and he felt his chivalry stirred on her behalf, as beauty in distress has always had a fashion of stirring chivalry.

So, growing more cordial and friendly all the time, he led her from room to room, until at last they entered the library,—a spacious, dignified apartment, lined with books in mellow bindings; and there he brought her forward, as if about to introduce her, to a portrait hanging over the high, carved mantel.

"This," he said, "is our most valued possession. It is a portrait of the ancestor of whom we are most proud, who died in the Parliamentary wars, fighting for the king. His name was——"

He paused abruptly, and Moira almost cried out: "His name was Royall Harcourt. You called your son after him, and I have heard Royall say that it was this picture which first taught him that he was a painter." But she remembered herself in time: the words were not spoken; and, instead, she stood si-

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lently gazing at the portrait, which had been brought to the distant New World by the first Harcourt who came to America. It was a finely painted picture of a young man, in the dress and with the long, curling locks of a Cavalier, handsome and gallant of bearing; his nervous, slender hand resting upon his sword, and his eyes gazing out from the canvas with the light of an undying smile in them.

It was when she caught that smile that Moira was again near betraying herself; for it was Royall's own smile—how often she had seen it gleaming in his eyes!—and, without absolute likeness, there was between himself and this long-dead ancestor of his a resemblance of type which was striking. For there was about each the same gay and gallant grace, the same debonair charm, and picturesqueness of aspect that belonged to another age. She glanced quickly at the man beside her. The survival of the type, though not so strong in him, was, nevertheless, apparent; and she knew that just such a father the long-dead Cavalier might have had in his English home.

"It is a fine picture," she said, when she could trust her voice; "and a very living portrait. I think that you are like it."

"Do you?" He was evidently surprised. "I have never been thought to be like it; but my son" (the words were so unexpected that Moira started) "resembles it strongly. Once he went to a fancy ball in the dress of a Cavalier, and it was as if the portrait had stepped into life."

"I can imagine it," she said; and then added quickly, before he could wonder why she was able to imagine it: "One frequently sees such strong sur-

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vivals of type in a family line. I have often observed it in a gallery of family portraits."

"Ah, yes! In the old countries it is possible to trace such things," he said; "but not over here: we are too new, too much a mixture of races."

"There does not seem to be anything new in this house," she murmured softly: "The atmosphere of it is full of the aroma of the past,—of old things carefully preserved, of old traditions cherished. I have never seen any place more charming."

"You are very kind," he said; "and you are right: we have tried to preserve and cherish both the material things and the traditions of the past; but" (a note of bitterness came again into his voice) "it is a hopeless effort. We cannot keep out the new spirit, and that means the end of the old order."

"Does it necessarily?" she asked almost imploringly, almost tempted to cry, "Trust us—trust Royall and me to continue to preserve all that is worthy of preservation here!"

But the voice which answered her made such words impossible.

"Yes, it means that necessarily and absolutely," Governor Harcourt said, with unconscious sternness. "The point of cleavage and irreconcilable difference has—I mean, must come. But" (with hasty recollection) "we need not discuss it now. Do you like old editions? Do you know much about them? Here are some that are very rare."

He walked over to the bookcases; and, as Moira followed him, and proved to his satisfaction that she did know quite a good deal about old editions, her heart was filled with pity, and she registered afresh

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an inward vow to bring Royall back to his place and duties.

They spent a delightful hour among the books,—delightful, at least, to Governor Harcourt, who seldom found so sympathetic a companion; and then, as the shadows of the golden afternoon began to lengthen, he took her out into the gardens. These were very extensive, and altogether untouched from the formal fashion of the century in which they were laid out, with long, box-edged avenues that ended in lovely flower-set spaces. One of these last fairly took Moira's breath away with its unexpected beauty, as they emerged upon it; for it was a secluded nook, walled by tall hedges of box, which made a green background for a superb host of *Auratum* lilies—the magnificent, gold-barred lily of Japan—growing in splendid array, circle upon circle, around an ancient sundial. Nothing could be imagined more lovely than these stately flowers, standing in their white glory and stillness, and filling the air with fragrance, as the sunshine of the summer afternoon poured down upon the quiet spot—a veritable “garden enclosed”—in which they bloomed.

“They are like the souls of the saints!” Moira cried in rapture. “Oh, beautiful,—beautiful! How charming to have put them here, alone in this green spot, away from the intrusion of any other flowers! For they look as if they had been brought from heaven. Was it *your* idea?” she asked, turning to her companion.

But she saw that he was frowning a little.

“No,” he answered. “I have never taken much interest in flowers,—at least not interest enough to

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plan their arrangement. This was planned by some one else" (he paused a moment),—"by my son," he ended, with a curious thrill of something like pride in his voice.

And Moira, as she looked at the lilies, in their white and gold splendor, so perfectly arranged against the dark green, which surrounded and threw them into relief, said to herself that she might have known that only Royall, with his artistic instincts, could have planned anything so perfect; and she was conscious that tears gathered in her eyes from the poignant effect of the beauty which was like a touch of his hand. She had a sudden inward vision of him on some sun-parched desert, and wondered if a vision did not come to *him* of this green, shaded nook, where the lilies bloomed, in the old garden of his home.

To break the silence which had fallen after Governor Harcourt's last words, she moved forward into the charmed circle of the flowers that, tall as she was, lifted their gold-rayed cups as high as her face, and bent to read the motto on the dial. It was the old, familiar admonition, *Tempus fugit*; and it carried a sense of comfort to her heart. Yes, time was flying, and in its flight it would surely soon bring Royall back to his father and to her. She wished that it were possible for him to find her here among the lilies, which would remind him, as they reminded her, of the lily-strewn hall in which "La Princesse Lointaine" first appears, and in which Bertrand comes to her.

"But they were not such lilies as these," she said, unconsciously speaking her thought aloud; and then she laughed as she caught her companion's glance

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of interrogation. "I was thinking of some other lilies that I have known," she explained. "But they were not like these: I have never seen any so beautiful as these."

"Shall I cut some of them for you?" Governor Harcourt asked, pleased with her admiration.

But she shook her head.

"Oh, no!" she said. "It would seem a sacrilege; they are so much more lovely here than they could be anywhere else. How wonderful they must be by moonlight,—more than ever like the spirits of the saints!"

"I hope you will come and see them by moonlight," he told her. "Emily must bring you over to dine with us some evening, and then you can see and admire the lilies to your heart's content."

"I shall like that," she said, with the little catch in her voice which came into it in moments of emotion; for surely this cordial invitation proved, if further proof were needed, that she had won all that she came to win—all that had brought her across the world,—that the fortress she had so daringly ventured to storm was ready to open its doors and welcome her as more than a guest. Again she was almost on the point of holding out her hands and saying, "See, you like me as a stranger! Will you not accept and like me as Royall's wife?" when a voice suddenly spoke just beyond the lilies amid which they stood.

"Here you are at last!" it cried. "I've been looking for you everywhere."

Governor Harcourt turned quickly.

"Why, Paul, so you've come!" he said. "Miss Fortescue, I believe you know my nephew."

CHAPTER XV

AS MOIRA turned at Governor Harcourt's words, Lyndon was quite sure that he had never seen anything so beautiful as the picture she made, standing in her tall, slender grace amid the tall, white, fragrant lilies. It is possible that, had his uncle not been present, he might have uttered the words (which rose in his mind) of one of the pilgrims in that scene of "La Princesse Lointaine," which the lilies had recalled to Moira's memory, and cried:

A lily thou of grace and slenderness!

But no man of Lyndon's type pays poetical compliments before another and older man—who in this case would certainly have thought that he had taken leave of his senses,—so he only said, prosaically enough, that he was very happy to meet Miss Fortescue again, and to see her down in his own country,—“where I hope you find some things that please you,” he added.

“I find many things that please me,” she answered, in her charming voice, with the soft, foreign accent; “but nothing more than this old garden; and in the garden, nothing so much as this nook, where the lilies bloom apart, like cloistered virgins. It was a lovely thought to plant them here, in such a way,” she said, while her eyes and her tone seemed to caress the stately flowers.

“I have told Miss Fortescue that, since she admires our old garden, and especially these lilies so

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much, she must come and see both garden and lilies by moonlight," Governor Harcourt said,—and Lyndon knew by *his* tone how greatly the beautiful stranger had pleased him. "We'll have her and Mrs. Granger over to dinner some evening, when the moon is full, and while you are still with us."

"That is a delightful prospect for me," Lyndon remarked, smiling at Moira. "But speaking of Mrs. Granger reminds me that I am the bearer of a message from her to you, sir. When I started for the garden a few minutes ago, she said: 'Tell the Governor that I shall be glad if he will come and bestow a little of his time and attention on me.'"

The Governor laughed.

"That sounds like Emily!" he said. "She never hesitates to let it be known what she wants, and I'm aware that I have been somewhat remiss in attention to her. But there have been so many things to show Miss Fortescue, and she has been so kindly interested in them all, that I've rather forgotten other matters. I must go now and make amends, however, since you are here to show this young lady whatever else she may care to see about the place."

Lifting his hat from his white head with a courtly air, he went away toward the house, and Lyndon was left alone among the lilies with the girl whose beauty seemed to hold such a note of kinship with them. He was struck with this afresh, as he looked at her; and also struck with the expression in her eyes, as they followed the erect figure of Governor Harcourt down the green avenue, which led to where the great roof of the house showed above the garden's verdure. It was not flattering to Lyndon, but he felt that for

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a minute she had forgotten his presence; then she turned her glance on him, with a smile in which there was a shade of apology.

"What a fine type he is, your uncle!" she said. "He is very much of a *grand seigneur*, and he has been extremely kind to me. Ever since luncheon he has been showing me the treasures of this lovely old place, as if—as if he knew how deeply I was interested in them."

"You must have made him feel that you were interested, or else he would not have taken pleasure, as he evidently has, in showing them to you," Lyndon said. "I can see that you have completely charmed him."

"Oh, do you think so?" she asked, with a quick eagerness. The color rose into her cheeks, and her eyes shone like blue jewels under their dark lashes. "That is very pleasant to hear."

"I should think that you were well used to hearing it," Lyndon told her. "I am sure that to charm people cannot be new to you."

"Perhaps not," she admitted candidly. "But some people are more difficult to charm than others, and, therefore, the triumph of winning their approval is greater. I fancy that your uncle is not easily charmed."

"Very far from it," Lyndon answered. "He is fastidious in his ideas of what a woman should be, and his standards are a little old-fashioned; but, when he is satisfied in the requirements of his taste, no man gives a more chivalrous admiration. And you," he added, impelled to express the admiration in his own mind, "are precisely the type to inspire it."

"Am I?" Again she surprised him with her child-

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like eagerness, which it was hard to reconcile with the *mondaine* air that otherwise distinguished her. "You are sure of that?"

"I am absolutely sure of it," he replied. "I know my uncle so well that I can tell beforehand what will please him; and I knew that he would be charmed with you before I came and saw that the charming was accomplished in the most complete manner."

"How delightful you are!" she cried, so gaily and sweetly that he was startled; for in all their intercourse before he had been conscious of a wall of reserve about her, which now seemed to be suddenly lowered. His heart beat quickly, but he held himself well in hand, determined that he would run no risk, take no premature advantage of the change in her manner.

"It is you who are delightful," he said, "to be so pleased at winning the admiration of an old gentleman who is undoubtedly provincial and, many people would think, narrow, as well as old-fashioned in his ideas." He paused a moment, and then: "I am sure that you have also charmed my mother," he said.

But here—again to his surprise—Moirá shook her head.

"No," she said, with the odd frankness which seemed to admit him into an intimacy that he had not expected, "your mother is not charmed. I have a sixth sense in matters of this kind, and I can tell when people merely admire and when they really like me. Mrs. Lyndon has been kind—oh, very kind and cordial!—and she likes some things about me—my appearance perhaps, and my Paris gown; but there is a very doubtful look in her eyes, as if she were ap-

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praising me, and were not quite sure of my worth."

This was so shrewdly as well as so simply said, and struck Lyndon as being so accurate a description of his mother's attitude of mind, that for a minute he found himself unable to reply. And while he hesitated she went on quickly:

"Don't think that I find it strange, or that I complain of being—appraised. It is most natural; for I know that people—especially, as you have said, provincial people—do not like a foreign note; and that note is, I am afraid, very distinct in me. You see" (her eyes laughed) "I am, as Leila called me when I was setting out this morning, a Far-Away Princess."

"You are, indeed," he said; "but, provincial though we may be—I as much as my mother and uncle,—we know how to appreciate and admire a Far-Away Princess when she comes to us. It is like these lilies" (he put out his hand and touched one). "They, too, have come from afar, and they have brought their note of foreignness with them—the strange, exotic note of things Oriental,—yet see how kindly and condescendingly they have made themselves at home in this old garden full of the spirit of another world. So might, so would, a Far-Away Princess do."

"Do you really think so?" she asked again, and once more the wistful eagerness came into her voice. "I mean, do you believe that she could ever succeed in making herself at home, in fitting into the picture, as the lilies have succeeded?"

"I am sure of it," he answered, with a thrill in his voice which should have told her what he was feel-

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ing. But it was part of the situation, which was later to develop so poignantly between these two, that neither understood the true position or meaning of the other; and each in consequence, with natural self-absorption of thought and emotion, conveyed a false impression to the other. For how could Lyndon possibly divine what was behind Moira's veiled questionings, or she remember that he had no armor against the perilous sweetness of her eyes and smile? After a moment he went on:

"If you could see yourself as you stand there, among those tall, white flowers, you would have no doubt of fitting into the picture as perfectly as they do. I think Royall must have dreamed of a Far-Away Princess when he planned this spot and planted its lilies."

"Royall!" she echoed, hardly knowing that she did so. For the unexpected sound of that name, coupled so strangely, yet so naturally, with her own fanciful title, seemed to fall like a bomb in the green place where Royall had planted his lilies and dreamed of a pre-Raphaelite picture, but not of the Far-Away Princess who now stood there, and looked at Lyndon with such startled eyes that he hastened to explain himself.

"I was alluding," he said, "to my cousin, Royall Harcourt—the son of the house,—of whom you have perhaps heard Mrs. Granger speak."

"Not only Mrs. Granger, but your uncle also," she replied, grasping her self-possession. "He told me that it was his son who made this beautiful nook,—the son who is not here to see his lilies bloom."

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"No, he is not here," Lyndon answered. "But I suppose you have heard—perhaps Mrs. Granger has told you—why he is not here?"

"Yes, I have heard." She dropped her eyes to the gold-barred cup of one of the lilies beside her. "He is in exile, this Royall Harcourt, because he has married to suit himself and not his family."

"That is hardly a correct statement of the situation," Lyndon said quickly; for, quiet as her tone had been, there was in it an accent which was like a suddenly unsheathed sword. "His family did not expect him to marry to suit them, but they would have expected him to remember that the heir of all the traditions and memories of this proud old house should have found a more fitting wife than a French actress."

Her cheek flamed with vivid color, though she was wise enough not to lift her eyes, which would have betrayed the anger roused by the scornful intonation with which he pronounced the last words. There was a moment's silence—a moment in which he might have seen a movement of her white throat as she swallowed hard,—and then:

"Do you know anything of this French actress?" she inquired.

"Nothing beyond the fact that she is an actress," he responded. "It is not my fault, however, that I know so little; for the real business which carried me abroad a few weeks ago was to see Royall and find out all about his marriage."

"And you did not succeed in seeing him?"

"No. As I told you (do you remember that last evening on the *Mauretania*?), I learned when I

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reached Paris that he had gone to Morocco, where I could not follow him, and that his wife had disappeared."

Again her cheek flamed.

"Do you think that 'disappeared' is exactly the word to express the fact that you were unable to find her?" she asked.

"It is exactly the word to express what I *did* find, which was that she had omitted to leave behind any address or clue by which she could be traced, when she went away to some place unknown," he answered.

"In law, as in fact, we call that 'disappearing.'"

"And you argued from this fact—what?"

"I argued, what all experience of the world proves, that people do not disappear in such fashion unless there is something they wish to conceal."

Still without looking at him, still intent apparently upon trying to decipher the strange red signs that were scattered like hieroglyphics over the white petals of the flower before her, she pressed her inquiry further:

"And what do you imagine the something to have been in her case?"

"How can I tell?" He spoke a little impatiently. "God only knows what affairs there may have been in her life which she wished to pursue without interference, with Royall safely out of the way in Morocco."

"Did she send him to Morocco?" The eyes which lifted from the lily now were so brilliant with indignation that he took a step backward as they turned upon him. "Was it her desire to pursue affairs of her own which sent him there, or was it the action

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of his father in refusing him the means necessary to pay his debts? You see" (she caught her breath), "I have heard—some details. And *you* might have heard in Paris a few details of Moira Deschanel's life, which would possibly have kept you from slandering her by insinuation."

"Miss Fortescue!" He was so amazed that for a moment he could only stare at the beautiful face, with its vivid color and glowing eyes. "You do me injustice," he then said gravely. "I could not be guilty of slandering any woman, much less my cousin's wife. You asked what was the natural inference to be drawn from such a disappearance, and I merely answered your question. For it is as I tell you: the world always finds mystery suspicious, and I do not deny that in this case I was ready to agree with the world."

"Why were you ready?" she demanded.

"Can't you see why?" he asked in turn. "Can't you realize that here, in his home, Royall's marriage to this foreign woman, of unknown life and questionable antecedents, is hardly less than a tragedy? I was ready to believe anything that offered a hope of ending it."

"Of ending" (she gasped a little) "the marriage, you mean?"

"The marriage, of course," he answered. "There is no other way of bringing Royall back to his home and to those whose hearts are breaking for him."

"No other way!" She repeated the words as if to herself, while her eyes, out of which the indignation seemed to have died, looked away from him, and dwelt again on the old roof-tree above the garden

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greenery. "If that is true—if there is, indeed, no other way by which he can be brought back," she said, "it is sad, since marriage can be ended only by death."

Something in the finality of her tone—as of one who would say, "The dead cannot be brought to life," or state any other unquestioned fact of existence—struck Lyndon. He looked at her quickly.

"Modern laws have changed that," he said. "Many other things besides death end marriage now."

There seemed something almost pitying in the glance she turned on him.

"How can any laws, ancient or modern, change a decree of God?" she inquired. "You must know that is impossible."

"We will leave aside the question of how much the indissolubility of marriage is a decree of God," he replied. "I can only assure you that in this country marriages are ended every day by force of the laws of man."

"And you would wish your cousin to take advantage of these laws, to win back his inheritance by forsaking the woman he has married, and to whom his honor and faith are pledged?" she asked, in a thrilling tone. "I was told that you desired this, but—I could hardly believe it."

"But don't you understand?" he said earnestly, for he felt that the scorn of her voice and eyes was more than he could endure. "It is not for the sake of his inheritance that I desire that Royall shall come back to his place and his duties, but for the sake of those whose hearts are bound up in him—and he

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cannot possibly come back unless he leaves that woman behind."

"Unless he leaves that woman behind!"

The woman who stood among the lilies repeated these words softly, as she had repeated some others a few minutes earlier, and seemed to meditate upon them for a moment before she spoke again. Then she addressed the flowers before her.

"You are very beautiful," she said, touching one of the petals gently; "but you are also strange and foreign, even in your beauty; so I fear you will have to go—when he comes who has left behind his Princess Far-Away."

"Don't!" Lyndon cried sharply. And as she glanced at him in surprise: "Don't apply that name—the name which in my mind is identified with *you*—to that woman——"

"But surely you know that it is hers by right," she interrupted; "that in Paris they call Moira Deschanel 'La Princesse Lointaine' more than they call her by her own name, because she made her fame as an actress in that play."

"No, I did not know it," he answered. "I know little and care less about actresses and plays. I never heard of the woman until Royall wrote that he had married her, nor of the play until you read it aloud on the deck of the *Mauretania*. But whether she played it or not," he added passionately, "I shall always feel that you, and you alone, are the true Far-Away Princess."

The wonderful sapphire eyes suddenly smiled at him again.

"Perhaps I am," the Princess said in a low voice.

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While the conversation was thus skirting perilous waters with the two who stood among the lilies in the garden, Mrs. Granger had claimed the liberty allowed by old friendship, and boldly attacked Governor Harcourt on the matter of his son's marriage.

"For, although you are a very delightful person, and I always enjoy your society very much, I didn't send for you merely to enjoy that society," she told him frankly. "I want to talk to you about Royall."

But at the mention of that name all the cordial expression and charm of urbanity vanished from Governor Harcourt's face and manner.

"You will pardon me," he said stiffly, "if I say that I do not wish to talk on that subject, even with you."

"Then don't talk," she returned obligingly; "but you can't refuse to listen to me. For, in the first place, to refuse to do so would be rude, and you are never rude; and, in the second place, you will surely be interested in hearing that I met Royall when I was in Paris a few weeks ago."

"Even at the risk of being rude, I must tell you that I am not interested," he said, with increased coldness of tone; "and, therefore, you must allow me to change the subject——"

"No, no; I cannot allow it!" she cried quickly. "And you mustn't put me off at arm's length like this,—you really mustn't! Don't you know that it is because I am so fond of you, as well as of Royall, that I want to talk about him?"

"Yes, I know," he answered more gently, as he patted the hand she laid upon his arm. "You are a good friend of all of us, but there are some things

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that one doesn't care to discuss even with the best of friends."

"I don't ask you to discuss anything, but just to listen to me," she urged. "And I have no intention of pleading for Royall: I only want to tell you some things about him which only *I* can tell."

"It is useless——"

"No, it isn't useless. Nature hasn't fitted you to play the part of an obdurate father, and you mustn't try to play it. You are a modern man and a reasonable one; though, of course, being a Harcourt, you can't help being proud and obstinate."

"Emily, all this is pure wheedling; and if you think I don't know it——"

"Of course, it is wheedling; and, of course, you know it; but, all the same, you are going to listen to me. My dear Governor, you are under a total mistake about the woman whom Royall has married. I met her in Paris, and I was completely charmed with her."

The Governor's jaw set grimly.

"So Paul told me," he commented.

"Yes, I know how Paul told you," Mrs. Granger commented in her turn. "He hasn't hesitated to tell *me* that he is better able to judge of a woman whom he has not seen than I am, who have seen her. Let us put Paul aside—I lose patience in thinking of him,—and let me tell you in words of truth and soberness what I found Royall's wife to be."

And then she told him—in words of truth, if not exactly of soberness; for her natural enthusiasm and impulsiveness soon ran away with her. But she at least conveyed to him a conviction of her absolute

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sincerity, and wiped out once for all the chorus-girl idea, which episodes like that of young Escott had put into his mind. There remained, however, another and more sinister conception than that of some shallow charmer of the footlights,—the conception of a siren of a more subtle and dangerous type, whose fascinations had been potent enough to blind not only Royall, but also this experienced and (with all her impulsiveness) shrewd woman of the world. And so, when she presently drew breath, he said a little dryly:

"I see that you have been, as you describe yourself, completely charmed. But are you aware that, immediately following Royall's departure for Morocco—and you are mistaken in thinking that I would have prevented his going on that expedition if I could,—the woman you so enthusiastically describe mysteriously disappeared?"

"Why, of course, I am aware of it," Mrs. Granger answered, without thought; and then, catching herself up quickly: "I mean that I heard from Paul that he failed to find her in Paris. But I see no mystery in her disappearance; for I know quite well where she is."

"You do,—and refused to tell him!"

"And don't you know why I refused to tell him?" Mrs. Granger's color rose and a spark of battle came into her eyes. "Don't you know that he wanted to find her in order to insult her—yes, I must use plain terms—with a proposal which I am sure could never have had your sanction?"

The Governor, whose own color had risen, made an uneasy movement. He was conscious of being in

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an uncomfortable position; for he did not wish to disavow Lyndon's action, which had been dictated entirely by zeal on his behalf; and yet in his heart he knew that he did not wholly approve of it.

"I didn't know until after his return what Paul had in mind when he went abroad," he said at length; "so his intentions did not have my sanction. But I wish that you had not interfered to prevent his finding this—er—young woman. It is possible that something might have come of an interview with her."

"What would have come of it would have been a breach with Royall which nothing could heal," she told him; "and I'm certain you do not want that."

"Whether I want it or not, I have it," he answered sternly. "My son is lost to me."

"But not hopelessly lost," she said. "You have only to hold out your hand, to say a word of kindness, and perhaps of apology——"

"Apology!" the Governor exploded. "For what, in the name of heaven, should I apologize to *him*?"

"Well, for writing some things of his wife for which there was neither reason nor justification. Of course" (hastily) "I know that you wrote them in a moment of anger; but if they were proved to be wholly unjust, you wouldn't, I'm sure, mind retracting them——"

She broke off as the Governor rose suddenly to his feet, and stood over her, an imposing and very angry figure.

"This conversation must end," he declared; "or I shall be betrayed into using language which I should regret to use to a lady. I shall neither apologize for

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nor retract anything that I have written to my son, who, on his part, has forgotten entirely what he owes to me, to those who have gone before, and those who are to come after him. I told you when we began talking of this matter that I preferred another subject, and now I must insist upon finding one."

Mrs. Granger did not answer for a moment. She was looking away from him, down an avenue of the garden—which lay before them, as they sat on a side veranda of the house,—in the green vista of which she discerned two figures, whose juxtaposition filled her with a wild desire to burst into laughter, and cry out: "Behold the woman of whom we are speaking,—the woman your son married,—the woman Paul Lyndon has been seeking,—the woman of whom you will believe no good report, but at whose feet both of you men are practically prostrate!"

Needless to say, however, that she restrained her inclination, conscious that the proper moment for such a revelation had not yet arrived; and when she could command sufficient composure, only remarked suavely:

"I am quite ready to change the subject, my dear Governor, since you insist upon it, and—er—you can tell me what you think of my friend, Miss Fortescue."

CHAPTER XVI

SO FAR things had been made so smooth for the two conspirators that it was hardly surprising that Mrs. Granger was elated, and that Moira felt her scruples laid to rest by their success. For of the success there could not be a doubt. All, or almost all, that they had set out to accomplish had been accomplished in an incredibly short time, and with little difficulty. The two men who were so deeply prejudiced against Royall's wife had each succumbed to her charm with a promptness which would have been amazing had not the charm itself been so undeniable; and there remained only the question of how and when to take the final step for revealing her identity and bringing about the dénouement which was to recall Royall, and reinstate him not only in his home, but in his father's affection and respect.

"But we mustn't be premature about that," Mrs. Granger found it necessary to say, after their return from the Manor. "I sounded the Governor, and found him still so obstinately set in his ideas concerning you that his pride might be enlisted to maintain them if you revealed yourself before the psychological moment arrives."

"How is one to tell when the psychological moment arrives?" Moira asked, wistful, yet smiling.

"I don't think there'll be any difficulty in telling," Mrs. Granger replied, with happy optimism. "The opportunity will present itself in a manner not to be mistaken, as everything up to this point *has* presented

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itself,—and, presto! the thing will be done. The Governor will own himself captivated; a cablegram will be sent, summoning Royall to come home; the fatted calf will be killed to welcome him; and you and he will settle down at the Manor and be happy ever after. Now, why are you shaking your head in that way?"

"Because it sounds like a fairy-tale, and fairy-tales don't happen in real life. So I'm afraid——"

"Of what?"

"Of failure at the psychological moment,—of something occurring to prevent the happy ending. You see, when everything goes so well as it has been going with us, when all that occurs seems to happen so fortunately, one must naturally expect a change."

"I don't see it. I consider that pure superstition."

"It may be superstition, but the experience of all mankind is behind it. And perhaps my Celtic blood is speaking; for I am distinctly afraid to count on the cablegram and the fatted calf, and the 'happy ever after'."

"Well, I don't insist on the cablegram or the fatted calf—those details are unimportant,—but I'm perfectly sure of the 'happy ever ever.' I could see Governor Harcourt's admiration in his face whenever he looked at you, and I believe that he will be enchanted to receive you as Royall's wife as soon as he recovers from the shock of the overturning of his ideas and prejudices."

"Ah, but will they be overturned? Remember that I am, after all, a Far-Away Princess."

"And wasn't everybody in love with the Far-Away Princess, just as everybody surrenders to your fasci-

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nation? Why, you've brought even Paul Lyndon to your feet! And that, as I've told you, is an achievement, indeed."

"Is he at my feet?" Moira asked, laughing a little.

But even as she laughed she was conscious of a slight thrill of discomfort in recalling the look which had been in Lyndon's eyes when they met her own among the lilies. It was a look which would have conveyed its message more unmistakably but for her preoccupation of mind, and also for Mrs. Granger's positive assertion that he was immune against the tender passion. Secure in that belief, she had put away the fear which her experience of men in a Gallic world had early taught her, and disregarded the instinct which might else have warned her of danger in association with this man. But, nevertheless, a vague uneasiness had stirred in the background, as it were, of her consciousness, and still remained there.

It lay forgotten, however, during the days which immediately followed; since in these days, although she saw much of Lyndon—for he was a frequent visitor at Covertdale,—she was seldom alone with him, and their conversation did not again approach such perilous subjects as those which had been discussed at their meeting in the garden. And there were also at this time many other things to occupy her attention. One, and necessarily the most engrossing, was news from Royall. His letters from Morocco now began to reach her, and were full of thrilling details of adventure, as well as of passionate longing to be reunited with her. "It is as well, perhaps, that I allowed you to go to America, to put the Atlantic

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between us," he wrote; "for if you were in France, I fear that I could hardly resist the temptation to leave Lemontier and rush back to you. As it is, however, I manage to control my desire to see and be with you again sufficiently to enjoy, in some degree at least, the undiluted Oriental life and picturesqueness which is all about me. How can I even begin to describe this to you!"

Yet he succeeded wonderfully, not only in describing the scenes and events of which he spoke, but in conveying a sense of the atmosphere that surrounded him,—the marvelous, enthralling atmosphere of the East. The fascination of its mystery, romance, and picturesqueness was so transferred to his pages that, when Moira looked up from them, she almost seemed to have the scent of the East in her nostrils, and to gaze with her bodily eyes at tawny desert and white-walled cities, at palm trees and minarets, rather than at the green landscape which in reality lay smiling before her.

It was with such an inward vision that, as she sat on the veranda of Covertdale on a brilliant morning, she lifted her eyes from one of the letters to see, standing in front of her, a vision of another and very unexpected kind,—a girl like a Dresden figure come to life, so dainty and delicate was she, so fair in blonde loveliness, with a wealth of pale golden hair, and eyes of cerulean blue, not deep-sea blue like Moira's own. Those eyes were regarding with evident surprise the absorbed reader before her; and as the latter glanced up, she spoke:

"I beg your pardon! When I came up on the veranda a moment ago I saw some one here in the

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shade of the vines, and thought it was Mrs. Granger. Is she at home?"

"I'm sorry to say she is not," Moira replied. "She went out motoring a little while ago; but I think she will soon be back. Won't you sit down and wait for her?" she added, as, mindful of hospitality, she drew forward one of the wicker chairs that stood near.

The charming figure hesitated a little, and then sat down in the offered seat.

"I believe I will wait," she said. "One doesn't care to drive six miles to leave a card. Besides, I want to see Mrs. Granger particularly. I am Miss Fane, Elinor Fane. And you, I presume, are the Miss Fortescue of whom I have heard?"

"Yes, I am Miss Fortescue," Moira answered. "But I am rather surprised that you have heard of me."

"Are you? Then you don't know country neighborhoods very well. As soon as Mrs. Granger arrived, the news spread that she had brought a—er——"

"Companion and secretary, yes."

"But not just an ordinary companion and secretary—though nobody can tell what use she has for either,—but a most extraordinary one. You don't mind my talking this way, do you?"

"Not in the least," Moira laughed. "But I assure you that I am not at all extraordinary."

"Oh, but you are!" Miss Fane assured her, with a gaze which took in every detail of her appearance. "And you have the stamp of Paris on you,—there isn't a doubt of that."

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"There shouldn't be: I have lived in Paris almost all my life."

"And you can leave it to come and live over here! Doesn't it break your heart?"

Moira smiled a little.

"It doesn't break my heart," she said, "because Paris is always there, you know; and, of course, I shall return to it some day. Meanwhile" (she glanced around comprehensively) "this is very charming."

"Oh, yes, charming enough, but" (Miss Fane shrugged her shoulders) "rather dull, you must admit. I know all about it, because my people live here; and, although I stay at home as little as possible, I'm obliged to come back occasionally. I've just now returned from a delightful yachting trip, and I find the dullness very trying; so I've come over to see what Mrs. Granger has on hand in the way of social amusement. Perhaps she is thinking of having a house party?"

There was a hopefulness in the last question which Moira felt almost sorry to be obliged to dash by replying that she was quite sure Mrs. Granger had no house-party intentions. And then, while Miss Fane continued to study her, with frank curiosity in her eyes, she was relieved to see the motor-car turning into the gates, and to know that Mrs. Granger herself was at hand to explain her eccentric conduct in coming to stay in her own house.

But the tone of voice in which she exclaimed, at sight of her visitor, "Why, Elinor, I'd no idea you were here!" told Moira that, for some reason, she was not glad to see the girl who started up to meet

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her, and whom she greeted so cordially. And this impression was immediately supplemented by the perception that she was anxious for Moira to go away. The latter, though pleased to go, nevertheless wondered a little, as she went away, why the anxiety should have been so evident. Was it because Mrs. Granger desired that Royall's wife should be seen under her present masquerade by as few as possible of those who would recognize her later, or was there some other reason which made intercourse with the lovely Dresden shepherdess undesirable? The sixth sense of which Moira had spoken to Lyndon, when alluding to her perception of his mother's sentiments toward herself, told her now that there *was* another reason,—that Mrs. Granger was distinctly annoyed by the meeting with Miss Fane, and, had it been possible, would have prevented it.

Some light was thrown upon this a little later when, after the young lady's departure, Mrs. Granger let fall a few careless words.

"I was rather sorry to see Elinor Fane," she said,—“not from lack of hospitality, or because I don't like her well enough, but because I was sure that, like everybody else, she would want to talk about Royall. They—er—knew each other very well.”

“Was that all,—that they knew each other very well?” Moira asked, with a sudden conviction that Royall must have admired immensely the extremely pretty person she had just seen.

“Well, there was some flirtation,” Mrs. Granger admitted; “and I think the Governor would have been glad if the affair had become serious; for the

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Fanes are old friends of his, and he is very fond of Elinor. But Royall always had a roving fancy until he met *you*. So he went away; and Elinor was left, not exactly lamenting—for no modern girl laments in such matters,—but certainly disappointed.”

“I see!” Moira’s eyes seemed to see a great deal, as she gazed at her friend. “This is the girl he should have married, who was selected by his family, and who is *convenable* in every respect.”

“No, no; we don’t do things in that way over here! No matrimonial arrangements are made by families: young people manage those affairs for themselves, and their elders seldom interfere. Of course, it would have been quite suitable—*convenable*, as you say,—for Royall to marry Elinor, and would have pleased both families; but he was not in love with her.”

“It’s rather odd that he shouldn’t have been. He admires beauty extravagantly, and she is so pretty.”

“But he wasn’t,” Mrs. Granger was distinctly obstinate on that point. “She was in love with *him*, however—I don’t think there’s a doubt of that,—so I knew that she would be very curious about his marriage, and ask any number of questions when she heard that I had met him in Paris.”

“And that was why you wanted to get rid of me?”

“Naturally. It wouldn’t have been pleasant for you to sit and hear yourself discussed; and I also knew that she would insist upon a description of Royall’s wife as soon as she learned that I had seen her.”

“It must have been rather difficult for you to give such a description, under the circumstances.”

“It *was* difficult,—at least she made it so. Now,

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at the Manor they were satisfied with general statements about beauty and charm; but Elinor wanted particulars at once, and I'm afraid I stumbled badly over those. How could I do otherwise when I knew that she had just been looking at you and taking in every detail of your appearance?"

"She certainly took in every detail," Moira said, recalling the keen scrutiny of the cerulean-blue eyes. "It was unfortunate that she chanced to see me."

"Most unfortunate," Mrs. Granger agreed, with a sigh. "But that is how things happen. Well, I hope we shall soon be able to present you to all whom it may concern as Mrs. Royall Harcourt. But I wish Elinor Fane had remained away until the matter was settled."

"Why do you wish that? What harm can she do?"

"I don't know that she can do any harm,—I only believe that she would if she could. And her coming is the first unlucky thing that has happened. So I'm wondering—it's my turn to be superstitious now!—if the turn of the tide is perhaps at hand."

"You mustn't wonder,—you mustn't think of such a thing!" Moira said energetically. "We are going to the Manor to dinner this evening; and before the evening is over something may occur,—something that will enable us to do away with mystery and to open the door for Royall's return."

CHAPTER XVII.

THEY were going to the Manor to dinner that evening because Governor Harcourt had not forgotten Moira's desire to see the lilies by moonlight. And the nights were now glorious with the full moon. So the invitation had been brought by Lyndon the day before, on one of his frequent visits to Covertdale, and, as Moira coincided in Mrs. Granger's cordial acceptance, she was conscious of an instinct that the psychological moment already spoken of was at hand—the moment which was to prove whether or not she would succeed in all that she had ventured and dared for Royall.

And so she made her toilette for the evening with a thrill of excitement in her veins that lent a glow to her beauty, a wonderful brilliancy of glance and color, which struck even Mrs. Lyndon when she entered the drawing-room of the Manor. She was, as usual, very simply dressed; but her clinging draperies of filmy black had the touch of highest fashion which only Paris can bestow; and she had yielded to the temptation to clasp about her throat a string of pearls which had been Royall's bridal gift. She told herself that it was appropriate she should wear them to-night, when she went as a specially bidden and honored guest to Royall's home; but she was not unaware of the fact that they gave the final touch of elegance to the exquisite grace of her appearance. Whether or not this grace would have been so apparent to Mrs. Lyndon if she had not seen the light

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which sprang into her son's eyes as the charming vision appeared is doubtful. But she caught that revealing flash, and felt her heart harden toward the strange, foreign loveliness which had evoked it.

And it was this feeling which found expression in her tone when she presently remarked to Mrs. Granger: "Miss Fortescue is looking very brilliant this evening. I suppose she is what would generally be called beautiful——"

"Oh, surely!" Mrs. Granger exclaimed, with some surprise. "I can't imagine how any one could possibly call her anything else. It is beauty of a most artistic type."

"But isn't she," Mrs. Lyndon went on, "rather an extraordinary type for a companion?"

"Really I don't know," Mrs. Granger responded carelessly. "But if she is, so much the better! One wouldn't—at least *I* wouldn't want a companion of an ordinary type."

"I don't see what you possibly want with one at all," the elder lady said sharply. "It seems to me an incomprehensible caprice on your part. What on earth does, or can, this girl do for you?"

"She is a delightful companion, in the true sense of companionship—don't you call that doing something?" Mrs. Granger inquired. "I've never known a more charming creature. And I'm sure"—with a laughing glance across the room—"that the Governor and Paul would agree with me on that point."

"Very likely," Mrs. Lyndon assented dryly. "But women who charm men don't always charm other women, you know."

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"Miss Fortescue has charmed *me*; and Leila simply adores her," Mrs. Granger declared—adding, in a tone of great concern: "I'm so sorry you don't like her! I thought—I hoped that you would."

"I like her well enough," Mrs. Lyndon replied hastily. "But there's something so very—er—unusual about her. She reminds me very much of pictures I have seen of foreign actresses."

"Oh, do you think so?" Mrs. Granger almost gasped, being wholly unprepared for penetration such as this from Mrs. Lyndon, of all people; not knowing what forces of mother love and fear had sharpened her perceptions.

"Don't you see it?" Mrs. Lyndon asked, regarding the lovely figure across the room with a glance eloquent of disapproval. "You must see how unlike our girls she is."

"*That*, of course," Mrs. Granger quickly agreed. "It couldn't well be otherwise, you know, since she is French in all her training; and the French girl is very different from ours."

"I can't help wondering if you know very much about her," Mrs. Lyndon remarked, with a reckless inclination to express all that was in her mind to the person whom she held accountable for the situation. "It seems to me that it is a great risk to take up strangers—especially of such an attractive kind——"

"But Miss Fortescue is not a stranger to me," Mrs. Granger protested; "and I hope that she will not be a stranger to you very much longer."

This, however, was an unfortunate remark; for Mrs. Lyndon could only put one interpretation upon it—that Mrs. Granger perceived Paul's infatuation as

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clearly as she herself did,—and under this interpretation she stiffened still more.

"I'm afraid that I can hardly share your hope," she said. "Miss Fortescue is no doubt very charming; but I am old-fashioned, and I like people of the kind I've always been accustomed to. If I had ever cared for foreigners," she added a little bitterly, "I couldn't care for them now, since Royall has cut himself off from us by marrying one. But there's the announcement of dinner, and here comes Gilbert to take you in."

This conversation had the effect of making Mrs. Granger more than ever anxious that Moira's true identity should be revealed without further delay; and she, therefore, found it hard to restrain her impatience when, after dinner, two elderly gentlemen dropped in, in easy neighborhood fashion, and the Governor, settling himself to smoke and talk politics, left Paul to do the honors of the garden for Moira.

"Shall we go and see the lilies now?" the young man asked, turning toward the girl, as the company gathered on the veranda in the fragrant coolness of the summer night. "They are waiting for you patiently."

"Are they?" she asked, smiling a little, but conscious, like Mrs. Granger, of not sharing altogether the patience of the lilies; for she had planned—forgetting how seldom fate allows such plans to be carried out—that Governor Harcourt should himself accompany her into the garden, and that among the flowers Royall had planted she would tell him that she was Royall's wife. It had been a perfect scene, per-

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fectly arranged, in her imagination; and now here was the reality: Governor Harcourt was talking to the undesired visitors, or at least to one of them; for the other had promptly fastened upon Mrs. Granger; while she, Moira, was going to see the lilies with Paul Lyndon! She sighed. But it was not possible to show her disappointment to the young man, who looked at her with such eager pleasure in his face; and so, saying, "Yes, by all means, let us go!" she descended the steps, and they walked away together into the moonlit beauty of the garden and the night.

For the garden was quite as beautiful as Moira had imagined it would be, in the floods of silver radiance which poured over it, and made it a place of enchantment, a very garden of dreams. And as they paced silently along the box-hedged avenues, past the dew-drenched, perfume-breathing spaces, where flowers lifted their chalices of bloom, Moira seemed to Lyndon more than ever like a Lady of Dreams, as she moved beside him, as he caught the delicate pale curve of brow and cheek under the soft, silken masses of her dark hair, and the lustre and gleam of the pearls about her white throat. The foreign grace of her personality was to him as fascinating as it was repelling to his mother; and once more the fanciful thought of a Far-Away Princess came to him, of one who brought with her a strange exotic fragrance of things distant, exquisite and rare.

So, each absorbed in thought and feeling of which the other was wholly unaware, they walked on silently through the stillness and beauty of the enchanted night, until they finally emerged into the cloistered space where, flooded with moonlight, the

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lilies stood, rank upon rank in their white beauty—such a fair and stately company that Moira cried:

"It is as I thought it would be. In this unearthly radiance they are more than ever like the souls of the saints!"

"They are like *you*!" Lyndon exclaimed, turning suddenly toward her. "Didn't I tell you the day I saw you here before that Royall must have dreamed of you when he planted these flowers, there is such kinship between you? They have been waiting for you a long time, and I—I have been waiting also. I didn't know it any more than the lilies knew—but I know it now. Does this sound to you absurdly fanciful?" he broke off, as she drew back a few steps and looked at him with a startled expression of dawning fear.

"Yes," she answered, catching her breath. "It is very fanciful, and I did not think that you were a man likely to become fanciful."

"Did you not?" He laughed a little. "I did not think so myself; but, you see, even a man like me grows fanciful when he loves. And I love you. The time has come when I must tell you that."

"*Mon Dieu!*" Moira gasped, unconsciously falling back upon her own language for the Name on which to call in this moment when the world seemed tumbling about her ears. She grew so white that, involuntarily, Lyndon put out his hand, as if to support her. But she drew still farther away from him, her wide eyes full of something like terror. "Are you mad," she asked, in a trembling voice, "that you venture to speak like this to—to a woman who has given you no right to do so?"

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"You have given me no right to hope that you return the love I feel for you," Lyndon answered. "But, unless I tell you of it, how can you ever begin to think of caring——"

She lifted her hand quickly, with a gesture such as she might have used to stop a blasphemy.

"You don't know what you are saying!" she cried. "And it is my fault that you don't know. If I could have foreseen!—Oh, what have I done! And how can I ever forgive myself!"

Clasping her hands together in a distress that seemed to him altogether inexplicable, she leaned back against the sundial that stood in the midst of the tall, white lilies, and looked away with a gaze that went beyond him into some infinitely distant region.

"You have done nothing, you have absolutely nothing for which to forgive yourself," he told her. "I am sure that no man has ever fallen in love with less encouragement than I have had from you. You have never given me a word or a glance in which it was possible to find a gleam of hope. I have known this all the time; and, strangely enough, it has been one of the charms which has attracted me. You have seemed set apart from all other women I have ever known,—remote and exquisite as a star. And I, whom even those who know me best think hard and practical,—I am in reality an intense idealist, and unconsciously I have been waiting all my life for a woman like a star. It is the story of the Princess Far-Away over again. I have found my ideal in you, and I would cross any ocean, dare any danger, to lay even a hopeless love at your feet."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" she cried again. "What can I

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say? What can I do? It is I who should be at your feet in penitence,—only you don't understand——”

“No, I don't understand in the least why you should feel such self-reproach,” he said. “There is no need for it. No man who loves a woman has any right to blame her if that love is hopeless, unless he has been led on by coquetry. But I have never seen a woman as free from coquetry as you are. The saints, to whom you have likened these lilies, could not, I think, be more free from it.”

She lifted her hands to her face, and he saw that his words had touched some deep sources of emotion. “Thank God!” he heard her say. And wonder kept him silent; for, in truth, he had no idea for what she was thanking God.

And so several minutes passed, in which they stood in the white moonlight among the fragrant flowers,—these two who had been brought together from such remote distance, only, as it seemed, to cause each other keenest pain, yet who were destined, perhaps, to learn from each other something of the deep mysteries that underlie both human love and human pain. Presently Lyndon spoke again.

“Try to forgive me for distressing you so much,” he said gently. “I can hardly forgive myself. Yet I couldn't have guessed that you would be so distressed, and I cannot imagine why you should be. It is not your fault that I have loved you. How could one know you and not love you?”

She dropped her hands and looked at him with a face pale as the lilies around her, and eyes dark with pain.

“You are mistaken,” she said. “It is altogether

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my fault that you feel toward me in this way. It is as if I had stolen your love—a great gift to which I had no right, no claim; and I have nothing to give you in return——”

“Why are you so sure of that?” he asked quickly. “Is there no possible hope that some day—in the future—you may have something to give me? I will wait any length of time——”

“No, no!” she cried. “You must put such a hope out of your mind. I shall never have anything to give you, except, indeed, my friendship—for which, perhaps, you will not care——”

“I could never fail to care for anything, any shred of regard, that you may give me,” he said, though he had grown pale at the finality of her tone. “You have already given me more than I ever had before—in the knowledge of yourself.”

“If you don’t want to kill me with self-reproach, you will not say another word,” she told him desperately. “You will think differently—you will despise me when you know the truth about me; and I shall deserve to be despised. For what I have done is indefensible,—I see it now. I have been wrapped in self-centred egotism, and never thought—but there is no excuse in lack of thought.”

“You are talking in enigmas,” he said. “Will you not tell me plainly what you mean, what you have done that you believe indefensible?”

“Not now,” she answered, with an effort at self-control. “There is some one else to whom I owe an explanation first. You will know very soon all that there is to know; and then you will find it hard to forgive me, instead of asking my forgiveness. No”

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(as he began to speak), "I beg you to be very kind and say nothing more. Let us go back to the house."

And then, as they moved away together, he heard her murmur something as inexplicable as her other utterances.

"The tide has turned," she said.

CHAPTER XVIII

MOIRA had been so stunned by Lyndon's startling declaration that she was only conscious, as she went back to the house, of an intense desire to get away, and in solitude and quietness look her position in the face. But, young as she was, the training of her life had given her a remarkable power of self-control,—of putting aside even an absorbing personal emotion when called upon to meet the demands of some outside duty. And so no one divined that anything out of the ordinary had occurred among the lilies in the moonlit garden; not even Mrs. Lyndon, whose maternal perceptions were very much on the alert. She had looked for something to happen when she saw the two young people go away together into the fragrant beauty of the summer night; and it was a relief to her mind when they returned without undue delay, and with a quietness of manner and bearing which seemed to indicate that nothing of a disturbing nature had taken place.

Only Mrs. Granger was aware of a subtle deepening of the remoteness which so often seemed to wrap Moira like an atmosphere; and she was hardly surprised that the girl made no effort to find an opportunity for the revelation concerning herself which she had hoped to make that evening. Fancying that her silence, when a little later they drove home together, proceeded from disappointment, Mrs. Granger made no attempt to sustain conversation and asked no questions. For this Moira was very grate-

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ful. After the efforts she had been forced to make before leaving the Manor, it was restful to lie back silently in the smoothly rolling car, and be borne swiftly through the magical beauty and stillness of the night. And the wind that came in such delightful freshness, laden with a hundred wild scents of forest and stream; the stars shining with tranquil radiance out of the immeasurable distances of space; the moon riding high in the violet sky, and flinging her silver light far and wide over the quiet land, were all influences which helped to soothe her nerves, to clear her brain, and to tranquillize her spirit. So, when at length she found herself in the seclusion of her own room, she was ready to kneel down quietly at the foot of her crucifix, to say her *meâ culpâ*, and to beg for the light and counsel of which she felt so grievously in need.

And the light and counsel came, as they never fail to come to those who seek them with an humble heart and an open mind. Not immediately, indeed: there were many hours before her of painful doubt, irresolution, and struggle of conflicting thought. But when she rose the next morning, after a sleepless night, she saw clearly that only one of two courses of action was open to her: she must either reveal her true identity at once, or she must leave the neighborhood of Harcourt Manor without delay.

From the first course she now shrank with an extreme reluctance, knowing that it would bring her into unavoidably close contact with Lyndon, and place him in a very trying position. For what would he think, how could he act, when he learned that the woman whom he had not hesitated to brand as a

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scheming adventuress was the woman in whom he had found the realization of the ideal which had always haunted his dreams, and to whom he had uttered words which it would be impossible for either of them to forget? Could he ever forgive her when he knew the truth, ever understand how she had been led to play such a part, ever cease to resent having been (as he would be likely to feel) "made a fool of" by her deception? For that it *was* deception she now recognized plainly. All romantic glamour, borrowed from stage-play, was torn away, as by a lightning stroke, and she saw her conduct as Lyndon would see it when he learned who she really was. A scheming adventuress! Yes, he might think that she had fully proved the truth of his characterization, by coming among Royall's people under a false name, and leading himself (for he might think even *that*) to fall in love with her, fancying her free, who was, in truth, his cousin's wife.

She wrung her hands as these thoughts pelted her like missiles. How right her husband had been in disapproving this plan of hers, and how inexcusably foolish her own conduct now seemed to her! She had gained nothing: on the contrary, she had lost much, for she felt sure that if she had followed her first impulse and met Lyndon in London under her own name; or if, when they were on the ship together, she had told him who she was, all would have been well. He would have taken up her cause, and fought her battles for her; his word, as she had been told, and had herself perceived, was all-powerful with his uncle; and he would have been able to open the door of the Manor to her, not merely as an at-

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tractive stranger, but as Royall's wife. In point of fact, he *had* opened that door; but as it was his hand that opened, so she felt that it was his hand which now closed it to her. There was in her mind not a doubt of that,—not a question but that she must, for the present at least, give up all idea of revealing herself and go away.

But how was she to go away without an explanation with Mrs. Granger, which she intensely desired to avoid? For she felt bound to silence with regard to what had occurred, not only on Lyndon's account, but also on her own. She could not bear that even the friend who had entered so closely into her life should know that her folly had made it possible for Royall's cousin to speak of love to her. That this was no fault of her own, except as far as her deception was fault, hardly made it seem less intolerable; and she was determined that, if it lay in her power to prevent, Mrs. Granger should never learn how mistaken she had been in her opinion of Paul Lyndon's insensibility, and should never be able to wonder at any time of their future association how much either of them remembered of this unfortunate episode. Yet how was the knowledge to be kept from her? How was she, Moira, to find an excuse for suddenly forsaking the adventure on which they had embarked, and which appeared so near a happy ending? The first intimation of a desire to do so would bring a storm of questions upon her, and how was she to answer them without betraying what she was determined not to betray?

It was difficult to see a way out of the *impasse*; but, determined that a way must be found, she went

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down to breakfast, conscious of looking almost as badly as she felt, after her sleepless night. Leila's keen eyes at once perceived that something was amiss with her.

"Have you a headache, Miss Fortescue?" she asked. "You look so pale and your eyes are so heavy."

Moira replied quite truthfully that her head ached, and that she had not slept well.

"Perhaps I shall feel better presently," she said. "Has the mail arrived?"

"Not yet," Mrs. Granger answered. "You *are* very pale," she added sympathetically. "What has given you a headache? We were certainly not very dissipated yesterday evening. I hope you are not worrying about anything. The news has been good from the—er—other side, hasn't it?"

"Oh, yes; fairly good!" Moira said. "But the situation grows almost unbearable on both sides," she went on, a little desperately. "I think I shall have to go back to France."

"Go back to France!" Mrs. Granger echoed, in a tone of extreme surprise. "But I thought that, on the contrary, you hoped and expected——"

She broke off abruptly, and looked toward the window, past which at this moment a messenger on a bicycle rode. Leila jumped up.

"That's a telegram!" she exclaimed. "I know the boy: he's been here before." And she dashed out of the window, which opened on the veranda, before any one could interfere.

The two left at the table looked at each other with that unspoken sense of apprehension which, even in

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this age of telegraphing, an unexpected message is apt to cause in the feminine mind. But Mrs. Granger spoke carelessly enough.

"No doubt it's a dispatch from Robert," she said. "He would rather telegraph than write any day, and he thinks I'm far beyond being startled. Yes, of course" (as Leila came back, holding up the yellow envelope, and crying: "It's for you, mummy!"). "I suppose he is telegraphing to inquire how much longer I am going to remain down here, or something equally important."

She tore open the envelope and drew out its enclosure, with a smile, which faded, however, when she began to read the lines of writing within. And there were an unusual number of these lines; for it was a telegraphed letter, rather than a dispatch of ordinary brevity, which was in her hand. The gravity deepened on her face as she read, and after a minute she looked up quickly.

"The messenger is waiting, isn't he?" she asked, with a thrill of excitement in her voice. "Give me a blank—quick!"

Leila handed her a blank, which the messenger had sent in with his book.

"He was told that there'd be an answer," she said. "What is the message about, mummy?"

Mrs. Granger did not reply until she had hastily written a few lines on the blank, and sent it out by the servant, who was now in the room. Then she turned a grave countenance on her companions, and answered Leila's question.

"The message," she said, "is from Dr. Severn, "and is to tell me that your father has been taken

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to a hospital for an operation for appendicitis. The doctor says that he hopes the case is not bad, but thought it best to avoid delay. That means that it's serious at least. I have telegraphed that I am starting to Baltimore immediately. I shall rush into Washington for the first fast train, and send the car back for you two, who will get ready and follow this afternoon. I am sorry" (she looked at Moira) "to drag you away in this manner; but, you see, I have no choice."

"Don't speak of it,—don't think of me!" the girl cried eagerly. "You don't know how glad I shall be if I can help you in any way. What can I do now—at once?"

"There is really nothing you can do for me, for I shall be gone in a few minutes—Oscar, order the car around without delay,—but it is a comfort to have you here to take charge of this child, and bring her and yourself, and all our belongings, into Baltimore this afternoon. You see, although I am not uneasy—an operation for appendicitis in these days hardly amounts to more than having a tooth extracted,—I feel that the sooner I can get there the better; for I know that Robert will be more satisfied if I am at hand. Heavens! how unexpectedly things can happen, can't they?"

With heartfelt emphasis Moira agreed that they could; and when she stood at the door a little later, and saw Mrs. Granger whirled away by a chauffeur who was bidden to pay no heed to the speed laws in getting her into Washington as soon as possible, she was hardly able to realize with what truly unexpected and extraordinary rapidity *her* difficulty

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had been solved, and the way of escape opened to her.

The days which followed in the spacious, handsome house in Baltimore, where Moira had already spent some time on her first arrival in the country, were, in a certain sense, dreamlike to her, so filled were they with anxiety for the absent master of the house, who lay between life and death in a hospital on the other side of the city. For it seemed doubtful whether the operation, which was at last performed so hastily, had not been delayed too long, so serious were the conditions which attended and followed it. The shadow of death hung almost visibly during these days over the hushed dwelling, where life resolved itself into waiting for news from the hospital and trembling when the telephone bell rang; and Moira, absorbed in the trouble of her friend, was hardly able to give any thought to her own affairs.

To Mrs. Granger she was at this time a very tower of strength, a help and comfort beyond words during the dark hours of anxiety. The energetic, capable woman was for once stricken into helplessness, and leaned for everything, but especially for the sustaining of her spirit, upon the girl whose service was so unwearied, and whose faith was so serene and assured. They came very close together at this time, the two whose lives had lain so far apart; for in such hours soul speaks to soul in a manner not to be mistaken or forgotten. The trivial and surface things of life, which ordinarily absorb so much of our time and attention, recede into their proper place; and the great things, the issues which

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stretch beyond time into eternity, step forward and show themselves for what they truly are—the only things which really matter.

“How strange and terrible it is to be suddenly brought to the realization of the dark gulf on the brink of which we are always standing!” Mrs. Granger cried one day, while pacing up and down the floor, waiting for news from the hospital. “It is always there, and we forget it so utterly. We are like children running after flowers and butterflies on the verge of a bottomless chasm. Surely the Power who made us must sometimes pity our childishness.”

“I am quite sure that He always pities it,” Moira said softly. “And if we did not sometimes forget the chasm that lies across our way—the certainty of danger, death, and separation,—how could we have eyes for the flowers and butterflies? But the good God has put them about our path to brighten it for us, and to speak to our hearts

of a happier home, far, far away.”

“But I don’t want a happier home far away!” the older woman exclaimed. “I want my own home,—the dear familiar home of earth. I want to have it and hold it; and that is what is so terrible—that I can’t have any certainty of holding it for an hour. O Moira, your ‘good God’ is cruel rather than good!”

Moira shook her head, smiling, as one smiles at a child.

“No, dear friend,” she said, “our good God is not cruel, but very kind when He opens our eyes to the uncertainty of life, and reminds us that it is foolish

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to set our hearts on the things which we cannot hold. You see, you had forgotten that you could not hold them, life has been going so smoothly and so well with you."

"Yes, I had forgotten," Mrs. Granger acknowledged. "Of course, in the background of my mind, I knew that terrible things might happen to me, as they happen to others, and that one unavoidable Terror stood at the end. But to know and to realize are two different things. I am *realizing* now what I only *knew* before, and I feel that I can never again have any sense of security in life."

"Security from suffering, from loss, and from death we can never have," Moira said gently; "but security in the wisdom and the goodness of God, which is the only true security, may be ours for the asking. You don't need for me to tell you that."

"Oh, I do need all that you can tell me!" the other cried wildly. "You speak as if it meant so much to you, your faith in the wisdom and goodness of God; and I see now that I have never really had any such faith."

"You will have it after this, I am sure."

"If Robert is spared to me——"

"No, no!" Involuntarily Moira held up an imploring hand. "Don't try to make a bargain with God. You will gain nothing by that. We are all inclined to make bargains with Him. But it is not so that we find peace of soul."

"How do we find it?"

"Only by submitting our will to His—there is no other way."

"Tell me" (Mrs. Granger paused suddenly in

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front of her), "could you feel like this, could you submit your will to the will of God, with certainty that His was best, if you heard some terrible news of Royall? Oh," she broke off quickly, as she saw the girl shrink and grow pale, "I am a wretch to say such things to you! But I can't help wondering,—it is so easy to preach, you know."

"Very easy," Moira agreed. "But I haven't meant to preach, only to suggest thoughts that might help you."

"Yes, I understand, and I am very grateful; but I want to know *could* you do it?"

They faced each other silently for a moment,—the woman writhing under the unaccustomed touch of suffering, and the girl who had gone down into the dark depths, and learned what flowers bloom there for those who love God. But even the bravest spirit quails at some suggestions, and Moira's eyes grew dark, as with a vision of unutterable pain, as they met the gaze so searchingly fastened on her. Yet, after an instant, her soul rose to meet the challenge.

"If I could not do it," she said quietly, "my faith would have no value; for that is the supreme test of faith—to accept the will of God."

"Even though it broke your heart?"

"Do you not know the saying of a saint, 'Blessed are the hearts that bend, for they shall never break'?"

"I don't know it, but you make me understand it—a little. Go and pray for me, that my heart may learn how to bend in order not to break,—if—the worst happens."

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But God was merciful, and the worst did not happen. The news they were even then waiting, and dreading, to hear came with a note of encouragement which had been absent from the reports before; and this note strengthened steadily until at last the patient was declared out of danger, and Mrs. Granger's spirits rose as high as they had fallen low during the time of anxiety. It was possible that she might not forget altogether what she had suffered,—the salutary reminder of the insecure tenure with which all earthly happiness is held, that she had received; but, seeing the rebound of her spirit as the pressure of suffering was removed, Moira inclined to doubt this.

But her doubt did not make her less sympathetic in the joy of her friend than she had been in her grief. It was a great happiness to see the cloud of threatening bereavement lifted, and to know that sunshine was to return to one who had been so kind to herself. And it was part of this overflowing sunshine that no sooner was Mrs. Granger's mind thoroughly relieved about her husband, and while she was awaiting the point of convalescence when he could be removed from the hospital, than she turned her attention again to Moira's affairs.

"It was most unfortunate," she said, "that Robert's appendix should have demanded removal just when it did, and interfered with, or at least deferred, the success of our plans. Everything was going so beautifully when I had to drag you away!"

Having no intention of revealing how far from beautifully things were going, and how much she was obliged to Mr. Granger's troublesome organ for the

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diversion it had effected, Moira answered that she did not regret having been dragged away.

"It gave me time for consideration," she said, "and for obtaining counsel, of which I felt much in need."

"And from whom have you obtained counsel?"

"From a very wise and kind French priest. Of course, his nationality makes no difference, except that one likes to speak in one's own tongue, especially when it is about delicate and difficult things that one must speak."

"And what counsel did this wise and kind French priest give you, if I may be permitted to ask?"

"Oh, but certainly you may be permitted!" Moira replied eagerly. "I have only been waiting until you were relieved of your anxiety about Mr. Granger to tell you. He says that I made a great mistake—that is, that I was guilty of a great folly—in coming over here under an assumed name, with a romantic plan in my head, and that I must certainly do one of two things immediately: let Governor Harcourt know who I am, or go back to France."

"And which do you intend to do?"

"I have not yet decided. I am making a novena,—do you know what that is?"

"I have an idea that it is some kind of a prayer."

"It is a nine days' prayer for a particular intention, and my intention is to ask what I shall do."

"And do you expect to be answered?"

"I am," Moira said serenely, "quite sure of being answered."

There was a finality in the tone of the reply which made further questioning as unnecessary as it would

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have seemed ill-bred, so Mrs. Granger was silent. But into her mind there flashed a remembrance of certain words which divine lips had once spoken: "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it done to thee as thou wilt." And it seemed to her, who knew as little of faith as do many men and women of the modern world, that here was faith great enough to merit a similar answer.

"I suppose, then," she said, after a pause of some duration, "that you will make no move of any kind until the end of your novena?"

"Not of any kind at all," Moira assented. "I shall stay here quietly with you, and I shall be glad if you will excuse me from seeing any one who may ask for me."

Mrs. Granger looked a little surprised.

"Nobody is likely to ask for you," she said, "unless it were some one from the Manor. Paul Lyndon is back in town. I met him on the street yesterday, and he said he intended to call very soon. Do you mean that you don't wish to see *him*?"

"I mean just that," Moira answered. "I am still bearing a—a false name, and I could not explain to him what I have not explained to Royall's father; so I would rather not see him. When my novena is finished I shall decide what to do."

CHAPTER XIX

IT DID not, however, prove altogether easy for Moira to avoid seeing Paul Lyndon again. For when he called to inquire about Mr. Granger, and to offer his congratulations on that gentleman's recovery, he asked for her with a directness which made evasion impossible, and Mrs. Granger was obliged to reply that Miss Fortescue had begged to be excused from seeing any one. There was a moment's pause; and then that happened which Moira had not foreseen, and could not have provided against if she had foreseen it.

"That means *me!*" Lyndon said, with a certain setting of the jaw and tightening of the lips which his companion knew well. "The last time I saw Miss Fortescue I told her that I loved her, and it is for this reason that she refuses to see me now."

"You—told her——"

Words failed Mrs. Granger, and she sat staring at him, with eyes so startled and a face grown so pale that he, in turn, looked at her in astonishment.

"Is there anything very remarkable in that?" he asked. "Why are you so much surprised? You must know that she is a woman with an extraordinary power of fascination, and I—am a man like other men."

"That is what I forgot," Mrs. Granger gasped,—
"or, rather, what I didn't believe—that you were a man like other men. I thought you were entirely

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different. I never dreamed of your losing your head like this——”

“I beg you to believe that I haven’t lost my head in the least,” Lyndon interrupted, in a distinctly crisp tone. “If there is any reason why I should not love Miss Fortescue——”

“Oh, there is!” Mrs. Granger wailed,—“my poor, dear man, there *is*!”

“Then I should be told what it is,” the man declared. “I have a right to know.”

But here Mrs. Granger pulled herself up sharply, and grasped the situation.

“There’s where you are mistaken,” she said. “You *haven’t* a right to know. Unless a woman has treated a man as I’m perfectly sure Miss Fortescue hasn’t treated you—in other words, unless she has led him to believe that she would accept his love—he has no right to demand any reason for her refusal beyond the fact that she doesn’t want what he offers.”

“That would be enough,” Lyndon assented, “if one were quite certain that there was not something else—some mystery, some reason which could perhaps be removed—behind her refusal. But from what she and you have said, I believe that this is so; and, therefore, I feel that I have a right to an explanation.”

“You have no such right,” Mrs. Granger repeated. “She owes no explanation of her refusal to you; and if you are wise—O Paul, if you are wise, you will never mention the subject to her again!”

“Why shouldn’t I mention it? Why shouldn’t I endeavor to win her love——”

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"O good heavens!" Mrs. Granger broke in wildly. "You don't know what you are saying. You don't understand how impossible—listen, Paul! Can't you trust my judgment in this matter? Can't you take my word for it that the sooner you put Moira Fortescue out of your mind and your heart, the better?"

He shook his head.

"I can take no word but her own for that," he said firmly.

"And haven't you had her word? I'm sure that you *must* have had it."

"You seem very sure of a good many things," he replied; "which proves that you could if you would tell me why you are so particularly sure that there is no hope for me."

"Would you expect me to tell you when I should violate confidence in doing so?"

"No, I should neither expect nor desire you to do that," he answered. "But the fact that there is a confidence which it would be possible to violate proves again—you see, I am not a lawyer for nothing—that something beside her indifference to me stands between us."

"But if you are assured of her indifference—and I know that she must have assured you of it,—why should it matter to you whether anything else stands between you or not?"

She thought that she had never before perceived so clearly the force of character in his face as when he looked at her now.

"Because," he replied, "if it is only her indifference which stands between us, I shall never give up the

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hope of changing that indifference to love. I am not impatient and I am very resolute. When I see an end before me, I spare no effort, and I can wait any length of time, to gain that end. The only assurance I want is *that the road is clear.*"

Mrs. Granger said "Good heavens!" again (this time under her breath), while she fell back in her chair, and gazed at him with eyes full of dismay. And as she gazed she was asking herself why she had not foreseen this, why she had been so blind, why she had not known that it would be the inevitable result of association with Moira Deschanel for any man who was not safeguarded by a knowledge of her true position? She had been foolish enough, as she now acknowledged, to think that Paul Lyndon was unlike other men; she had thrust him into overwhelming danger, which he had not known to be danger; and, now that all the fire and force of his nature were awakened, he only asked to be assured that his road was clear! She could have wept over him, only weeping would but poorly have expressed her intense self-reproach.

After a few moments of silence, it was he who spoke again:

"Perhaps you are wondering why I should trouble you with my feelings in this manner; but you are very close to Miss Fortescue: you are her friend, and the only person who knows anything about her——"

Here Mrs. Granger suddenly broke in:

"It is true that *you* know nothing about her—about her past life or her antecedents," she said. "Haven't you thought of that?"

"Yes, I have thought of it," he answered quietly.

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"But to know her is enough to make one certain that there can be nothing in her life which, in any serious sense, one would wish otherwise."

"And you can say this,—you!" she cried, "when you remember what you have thought, how you have spoken of Royall for trusting a woman as you are ready to trust Moira Fortescue!"

The unexpected intrusion of a name and a subject so far from his mind made Lyndon stare for a moment; then the blood mounted to his face.

"The circumstances are different," he said hastily. "It is not possible to compare the two cases——"

"No," she interrupted, "it is *not* possible to compare them, because, as a matter of fact, Royall knew everything which it was essential for a man to know about the woman he married, while you know absolutely nothing of the woman you are anxious to marry. Isn't there any lesson for you in that?"

Again he stared at her.

"What lesson should there be?" he asked.

"The lesson, perhaps, of distrust of your own judgment, and of penitence for the position you have taken toward your cousin and your cousin's wife," she replied, a little dryly. "If you don't see this——"

She paused abruptly, conscious that her tongue was about to betray her into making a revelation which she had no right to make; and as she paused Lyndon rose.

"I see that we have touched upon a subject which there is no good in discussing," he said, a little stiffly; "so I will not intrude upon you longer. Pray, understand that in making my position toward Miss For-

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tescue clear to you, I've had no intention of begging your help——”

“My poor boy!” she said, laying her hand on his arm, as she, too, rose. “The only help which it is in my power to give you, I will give without your asking. Be assured of that.”

He was so well assured of it from the warm, almost tearful sympathy of her tone that he went away unconsciously comforted, though without any knowledge of the form which the help she pledged him would take. And the door had hardly closed upon his figure when Mrs. Granger, with a mouth set in resolute lines, went in search of Moira.

She found the latter in her own room, writing at a desk which stood near one of the windows; and she wasted no time in preliminaries before opening the attack she had come to make.

“Moira,” she said, so sharply that Moira started as she turned around, “why didn’t you tell me that Paul Lyndon had fallen in love with you?”

Moira’s eyes opened widely, and the eloquent blood rose to her face in a vivid blush; but she answered promptly enough:

“Because it seemed to me a dreadful thing, one of which I was deeply ashamed; and I hoped that neither you nor any one else need ever know of it.”

“You were an idiot to think that possible,” Mrs. Granger told her. “You should not have endeavored to manage such a situation as this alone. You should have come to me, if only because I was as much or more to blame than you were in allowing it to come to pass.”

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"Oh, I don't feel that in the least!" Moira declared quickly.

"Whether you feel it or not, it is a fact," Mrs. Granger returned. "I am a good deal older than you are, and I'm a woman of the world if I'm anything at all; so I should have recognized the danger of the game I led you into playing. For I led you into it,—you must remember that."

Moira made a gesture which was unconsciously dramatic and extremely French.

"I remember only your kindness," she said.

"Well, that's very kind of you," Mrs. Granger said; "but I think you must remember a little more. You can't have forgotten that I put the idea of coming to America into your head, that I induced Royall to consent to your coming, that I advised you against meeting Paul Lyndon in your true character in London, and also against telling him who you were when you were thrown together on the *Mauretania*. Oh, there's no doubt whatever about my responsibility in the matter! And I was keenly conscious of it when I had to sit and hear that poor man talk of his love for you."

"I hoped you would never know of it," Moira said, in a tone of distress. "I couldn't bear the thought of the knowledge being in your mind. *Why* did he tell you?"

"My dear, for all your cleverness, you don't know much about men in love, if you ask that question. They can't help talking of what possesses them so strongly, especially if they are sure of a sympathetic listener; and, of course, Paul knew he was sure of that in me. He would have been very far from open-

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ing his heart as he did, however, if he had guessed how much I had to do with the trick which has been played upon him."

"Ah, don't call it a trick!"

"I don't really see what else I can call it; for it *was* a trick, and a well-deserved one, so far as he was concerned. But I doubt if he'll ever forgive it."

"I'm afraid he never will," Moira agreed sadly. "He will feel that his love has been stolen. And so it has been, only not by intention; though he may not believe that."

"It's more than likely that he won't believe it; for he is self-assured and obstinate to the last degree, as you've discovered. And his pride will be terribly hurt."

"Oh, I know it,—I know it! And I am to blame for the hurt."

"If you were to blame for nothing worse than hurting his pride and self-esteem, I think you might support the burden very well," Mrs. Granger remarked. "But there's his heart! Angry as I have been with him, I could have wept over him when he let me see how deeply he has learned to love you."

"I have wept tears beyond counting," Moira said simply; and in her beautiful eyes some of those tears stood as she spoke. "It has nearly broken my heart to know—to feel——"

Mrs. Granger nodded comprehendingly, as the voice faltered and ceased.

"I can understand *that* very well," she said. "What I can't understand is how you could have allowed matters to go so far without realizing that it *was* necessary that he should know the truth about

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you; how you could have let him declare himself——”

But here Moira interrupted.

“I did not let him: he declared himself before I had the least idea what he was going to say,” she exclaimed. “How could I have had an idea? You had told me——”

“I remember very well what I told you, which only goes to prove what a fool I can be occasionally. But there must surely have been some signs to warn you.”

“Perhaps” (dejectedly); “but, if so, they didn’t warn me. You see, I was very self-absorbed.”

“And, if I may ask, when and where was this declaration made?”

“At Harcourt Manor, the last evening we were there.”

“Ah,—out in the garden, under the moonlight, among the lilies! O Paul, poor Paul, what a trap was laid for you, and how you fell into it!”

“Why do you speak of a trap, when you know that we never dreamed——”

“My dear, I’m afraid that lack of dreaming—that is, of foreseeing consequences—doesn’t excuse us, for you know

Evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as by want of heart;

and we must plead guilty of want of thought to an extraordinary degree. Of course, we are sorry; but contrition amounts to nothing without—what do you call it?”

“Restitution?”

"Yes, restitution. It's rather difficult in this case, because I'm afraid it's beyond your power to restore the heart you've stolen. But at least you can give the man the truth to which he is entitled. Why didn't you tell him who you were that night in the garden?"

"How could I, when I had not yet told Governor Harcourt? It was due to him, as the head of the family, to be told first."

"From the Old-World point of view, I suppose it appeared so. But, in your place, I should have forgotten Governor Harcourt, and thought only of helping Paul Lyndon."

"But it was difficult to see how the truth would help him—then. Things had suddenly become complicated. It seemed too late to help him with the truth, but very possible to hurt him by telling it. Don't you see in what a painful and embarrassing position he would have been placed if I had revealed my true identity after—after he had made that declaration in the garden?"

"Oh, yes, I see that clearly enough! It would have been a very trying position for him, and also for you."

"I didn't think of myself: I would have been willing to suffer anything, since it was all my fault. But I felt bound to think of *him*, to spare him pain and embarrassment as far as possible. And so it seemed best to go away quietly."

"Did you mean to go away altogether? Was that your intention when we left the Manor that night?"

"I had no clearly defined intention then, but I came down to breakfast the next morning intending to tell

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you that I wanted to go into Baltimore to seek counsel; and—you know what happened, to carry us all unexpectedly away."

"How very odd!" Mrs. Granger sat staring at her. "I suppose it was only a coincidence that Robert's appendicitis developed just then; but it seems almost like an intervention."

"I fancy it was only a coincidence," Moira said; "but it was one for which I was very grateful, if you won't misunderstand my saying so. I don't mean, of course, that I would have wished Mr. Granger to develop appendicitis."

"I am quite sure of that. You mean only that, since he was to develop it, the development came at an opportune time for you. And I never suspected—you never allowed me to suspect anything! You let me lean on you for everything during all that time of trial and danger, you met every demand on your time and strength and sympathy, and never said a word of your own difficulties. Moira, you are wonderful!"

Moira shook her head.

"Not wonderful at all," she said. "I was glad to forget my own troubles in yours; and more than glad to be of use and help to you, who have been so good to me. But I have known all the time that as soon as Mr. Granger was well again I must face a decision."

"But I thought that your wise, kind priest told you——"

"That I should either make myself known to Governor Harcourt or go back to France, yes. But he strongly advised me to go back to France even if I

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did make myself known; so the doubt in my mind—a doubt altogether on account of Paul Lyndon—has been whether to go without revealing myself, and from the other side write a letter acknowledging the truth, or whether I should tell Governor Harcourt who I am before I go. It was to solve that doubt I made the novena of which I spoke to you, and to-day——”

“Yes, to-day?”

“To-day it ends; and Paul Lyndon has himself come and told you what I never meant you to know; and you think——”

“No,” Mrs. Granger interrupted emphatically, “I don’t think, in the sense of being in doubt: I am absolutely sure that you owe the truth to him, and that you have no right to delay longer in letting Governor Harcourt know who you are. The only question to be settled is, how will you tell him? If you wish me to do it, I’ll beard the lion for you; I will tell him. It is only right that I should do so, since I am accountable for your being here.”

“How very good you are!” Moira said gratefully. “But I cannot let you do this for me. It would be too cowardly; and, besides, I am not at all afraid of the lion. He has been too kind to me. I am afraid only of doing what Royall would disapprove, or what might do him harm. But it is too late for hesitation now, and what is to be done should be done at once. Didn’t you tell me that Governor Harcourt had written, saying that he wanted to come and see Mr. Granger as soon as he was allowed to receive visitors?”

“Yes; he asked to be told when Robert would be

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able to see him; and, since he is able now, I will write and ask him to come. I'll tell him that I shall expect him to lunch day after to-morrow, and then you can make your revelation to him."

"And after it is made, however he receives it, I shall return to France," Moira said. "Our beautiful dream of sending for Royall is impossible of fulfilment at present, under any circumstances; for a letter which I have just received from him—one which I was answering when you came in, though God only knows when my answer will reach him—tells me that he is going with M. Lemontier farther even than Fez, from which this letter was written, and sent by a courier bearing official dispatches from the army to the coast."

"Where on earth is M. Lemontier going? Fez sounds like the end of all possibilities of adventure."

"Ah, there is even more beyond! There is Marrakesh; and, failing that, he intends to strike for the French Sahara. It is a terribly dangerous undertaking, and I am filled with anxiety and misery in thinking of it."

"I can see that you are," Mrs. Granger said, as she met the eyes which were such transparent windows of the soul within, and from which, indeed, acute anxiety and misery looked at her. "And I have taken this moment to come and trouble you about Paul Lyndon, and about telling Governor Harcourt who you are! I can't forgive myself."

Moira put out her hand and touched her gently.

"You have nothing with which to blame yourself," she said; "for it is right that I should be troubled about both matters, and I am glad that you came to

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me. I am glad to know that you understand the situation exactly as I understand it, and that you will help me to do what is right in it."

"It's only just that I should help you," Mrs. Granger declared; "for I am more accountable for the situation than you are, and almost as much interested in it. I will go and write to Governor Harcourt at once. Even if there were no other reason for telling him at this time what he ought to be told, the news from Royall would be sufficient cause. He should know something of his son's danger."

"I think," Moira assented gravely, "that he should."

CHAPTER XX

MRS. GRANGER'S note was promptly dispatched to Governor Harcourt, but again the Fates intervened to delay the revelation which Moira was now so anxious to make to him. Mrs. Lyndon replied, saying that her brother was not at home: that he was at that time with some friends at the Hot Springs of Virginia; but that she was sure he would take pleasure in paying a visit to Mr. Granger as soon as possible after his return. And meanwhile she begged to offer her own warm congratulations, etc., etc.

Mrs. Granger handed the letter to Moira.

"You see, we have no choice but to wait a little longer," she said, "unless you could make up your mind to speak to Paul Lyndon——"

But Moira shrank from this suggestion.

"I would rather not come into contact with Paul Lyndon again," she answered. "And I think, as I have always thought, that it is due to Governor Harcourt that I should tell him first."

"Then there's nothing to do but to wait," Mrs. Granger repeated. "And meanwhile the doctors say that it will be well for Robert to go to the seaside after he leaves the hospital; so we have decided to spend a few weeks at Atlantic City, and, of course, you will go with us. You know that, apart from the pleasure of your society, you are the greatest help possible so far as Leila is concerned."

"I am very glad to be of use," Moira said; "and,

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of course, I will go with you. But what and where is Atlantic City?"

"It is a seaside resort on the Jersey coast, which, being very near to three large cities, is immensely popular with the million. Consequently it is without any claim to social distinction. But there are times when places of this kind are desirable. Just now, for example, it is better for Robert than Newport or Bar Harbor would be; for he will have no temptation to social dissipation, and can simply devote himself to getting well; while you will be able to find amusement in observing the ways, manners, and customs of the great middle class of America."

So, as soon as Mr. Granger was permitted to leave the hospital, the Granger household moved to Atlantic City and, established there in luxurious quarters in one of the large hotels overlooking the ocean, the invalid began speedily to regain health and vigor; while Moira, as Mrs. Granger had prophesied, found much to interest, as well as to amuse, her in the tide of strange humanity which moved in continuous stream along the board walk, and disported itself, in a fashion amazing indeed to French eyes, on the magnificent beach, where the great Atlantic waves rolled ceaselessly.

But, although she was interested and amused, although the September sunshine was like dissolved gold, and the September air full of stimulating freshness, as it came borne from the wide expanse of the great liquid plain that stretched away to the eastern horizon, toward which Moira's eyes so often and so wistfully turned, Mrs. Granger perceived that, as the

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days went on, she grew paler and more silent, and it was clear that some trouble was preying on her mind and heart. Mr. Granger presently perceived and commented upon this.

"Miss Fortescue isn't looking well of late," he said. "She has the appearance of one who is suffering from anxiety. Isn't it possible that this might be relieved?"

"I'm afraid not," Mrs. Granger replied. "You see, her anxiety is about some one who is—er—very far away."

Mr. Granger nodded.

"Of course, I understand," he said. "She is anxious about Royall Harcourt's safety."

Mrs. Granger almost jumped out of her seat.

"Robert!" she gasped. "How did you guess——"

Mr. Granger smiled quietly.

"My dear," he said, "I am really not quite a fool. I guessed as long ago as when we were in London. But since it pleased you to maintain a mystery, and since you didn't ask my advice with regard to the wisdom of this mystery, I respected my promise not to interfere and kept silent about what didn't concern me."

"Robert, you astonish me! I couldn't have imagined you capable of such conduct."

"I could hardly have imagined it myself," Mr. Granger replied, in a tone of conscious virtue; "but I do think that my conduct has been exemplary."

"That isn't at all what I mean,—you know it isn't! I couldn't have imagined that you would have played such a part to me: pretended to believe what you didn't believe——"

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She broke off as she met her husband's quizzical glance.

"And who was pretending to *me*?" he inquired. "You didn't think me worthy of your confidence, and yet you are aggrieved that I held my tongue like a gentleman when I saw—couldn't help seeing, you know—what I was distinctly asked not to see."

Mrs. Granger gazed at him in silence for a moment, with eyes full of frankest amazement.

"And you've known all the time!" she ejaculated. "And not only held your tongue, but seemed to accept what you were told! I'd no idea you could play a part so well."

"I've often told you that you didn't appreciate my capabilities at their true value," Mr. Granger said complacently.

"I'll never doubt your capability of acting again," she answered. "But I don't understand why you didn't tell me when you guessed who Miss Fortescue really was."

"Why should I have done so? As I've said, you didn't give me your confidence."

"I thought you would disapprove of what I was doing, and be discouraging about the result."

"You were right. I did disapprove of what you were doing; but I saw that you had set your heart upon doing it, so I thought I would let you carry out your plan in your own way. You see, by not interfering, I incurred no responsibility—and, then, I confess I was amused. It was like watching the development of a play, especially when Lyndon came on the scene."

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"Robert, do you mean to tell me that you saw——"

"My dear, I should have been blind if I hadn't seen that our friend Paul was—er—deeply impressed."

"You saw *that*, and didn't warn me!"

Mr. Granger lifted his brows in honest surprise.

"It never occurred to me that you wouldn't see it as plainly as I did," he said. "Why should I have insulted your intelligence by supposing that you didn't? I took it for granted that it was your way of punishing Lyndon for the conduct over which you were so indignant when we met him in London. I thought it a slightly cruel and rather dangerous way, but still——"

"Still it amused you, and so you said nothing! I couldn't have believed that you would have acted in such a manner. If you had only warned me!"

"But how could I imagine that you needed warning? There were the old familiar facts of human nature staring you in the face."

"They weren't staring me in the face; or, if they were, I didn't recognize them. Robert, I have been an absolute fool in this matter."

"Well, not exactly that," Robert kindly disagreed; "but you have acted foolishly beyond doubt, and I shouldn't be surprised if you had led Miss—er—Fortescue into a very awkward position. When I heard that Lyndon had gone to Harcourt Manor—and I didn't hear it until some time after he had left the city,—I decided that it was time for me to interfere; so I meant to go down to Covertdale and tell you that the mystery or masquerade, or whatever you

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choose to call it, had better be ended, when my confounded appendix asserted itself in a way that put all thought of anything else out of my mind. Of late, however, I've been wondering what happened, and what your final intentions are?"

"It will be a relief to tell you all about it," Mrs. Granger replied. "I only wish I had told you before."

Then she proceeded to open her mind and heart, and to lay the whole matter in detail before the man whose shrewdness and reticence had so much surprised her, and also inspired a respect for his power of judgment, in which she had been rather lacking before. He listened in silence, smoking the while, and watching the long waves breaking one after another on the beach before which they sat; until at length, having brought her recital down to date, she paused, when he said, without hesitation:

"The sooner the masquerade is ended, the better. To maintain it longer isn't fair to Lyndon. Governor Harcourt should be told at once."

"He will be told as soon as Moira can see him. But meanwhile she is, as you've perceived, very anxious and unhappy about Royall. She has had no news of him since she received some time ago a letter from Fez, telling her that he was going into a remote and dangerous part of the country. If anything happens to him in those wild, desperate places, I don't see how the Governor can ever forgive himself."

"The Governor will probably feel that it was Roy's own fault that carried him into those places. But, all the same, I think he should be told."

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"He will be told," Mrs. Granger repeated, "when we return to Baltimore, and an interview with him can be arranged. Moira wishes to tell him herself who she is; and it's her intention then to go back to France, where she will be better able to hear news of Royall."

Mr. Granger nodded approval.

"It is the best place for her," he said.

But when, a short time after this, Mrs. Granger sought Moira in order to inform her that Mr. Granger had at last been admitted into their confidence, she found her with a face so altered in expression, with eyes so bright and glowing, that she cried at once:

"You have had good news! You have heard from Royall!"

"I have heard from him, yes," Moira answered. "But whether it is good news or not—further than that any news from him is good—I cannot say. His letter is written from Oran. Thank heaven, he is at least safely out of Morocco! But he says that M. Lemontier was on his way—and he, of course, with him—to Tripoli."

"Why on earth?"

"Because of mysterious and urgent directions to go there, where, Royall says, it is hinted that events of importance will soon take place. 'This,' he writes" (she opened his letter and began to read), "'can mean only that, since the French occupation of Morocco is now an accomplished fact, Italy will lose no time in seizing Tripoli, lest France or some other power should extend her influence in that direction. If any such step is in prospect, we are anxious to be on the spot in advance of it, and so we shall lose no

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time in getting there. I am delighted at the prospect; for there may not only be adventures ahead, but Tripoli is another last stronghold of mystery and picturesqueness, as my Far-Away Princess will remember.' "

Moira looked up from the letter with shining eyes.

"*He* remembers that Tripoli was the home of the Far-Away Princess," she said. "It seems a good omen that he should go there, as if, in some subtle fashion, we were being brought together again. Oh, I must return to France at once! For if he cannot come to me, I may perhaps go to him—in Tripoli."

"Well, you shall return to France; but you must take with you the assurance that his home is open to him, and that you have won his father's heart; and, in order to do this, you must make your long-delayed revelation to Governor Harcourt."

"When can I see him to make it?"

"In a few days we shall go back home, and I will then write and ask the Governor to come to see us. Of course, he will come; and I don't know how it may be with you, but it seems to me that the fall of the curtain on a happy ending is clearly in sight."

"Do you think so?" Moira's tone was as wistful as it was eager. "I hope the happy ending may be in sight; but a fear—a premonition of misfortune—has been with me for many days, and I cannot throw it off."

"It is the result of your long anxiety. But you will be able to throw it off when you get news from Tripoli,—strange, unknown byway of the world, and fit home for a Far-Away Princess, that it is."

But the next day brought news which lifted Tripoli

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from forgotten obscurity into a foremost place in the world's attention,—news that the Italian fleet had sailed into the harbor, and bombarded and taken the city from the feeble grasp of the Turks, who had held it since the Knights of St. John surrendered it to them in the sixteenth century.

Those who recall the events of a contemporary history (of which, as a rule, people know less than of any other kind of history) will remember that, following the sudden descent of the Italian forces upon Tripoli, and the surrender of the city, there was an interval in which little news reached the outer world other than accounts of the host of distracted fugitives who fled by every ship available, and the complaints of the correspondents who were ingloriously held in durance in Malta on their way toward the seat of war.

It amused and gratified Moira to consider the immense advantage over these last which M. Lemontier had secured by the inside information which had placed him on the ground before events happened; and she awaited with utmost eagerness the news which she was sure must very soon reach her from Royall. "I shall have a cable message from him at once. He will know that I want to be assured of his safety," she said, as soon as the news of the fall of the city had been flashed around the world. But the message so confidently expected did not come. Days went on; and then there was news of renewed fighting, of Arab resistance to the Italian occupation, but still no word from Royall broke the silence; and Moira began to grow anxious again, wondering

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whether he had, indeed, been in Tripoli, or what had become of him.

"It seems foolish to be uneasy," she said to Mrs. Granger; "but in a country so unsettled, among a people so wild, *anything* may happen; and I am certain that he would not fail to send me a message if he were within reach of a telegraph."

"But in times of war," Mrs. Granger suggested, "messages are often censored—'held up.'"

"There would be nothing to censor in an assurance of his safety."

"But, my dear, I don't suppose that he thinks there is any occasion to send you such an assurance. He knows that you know that foreigners are not in danger in fighting of this kind."

"Bullets and shells are not respecters of foreigners," Moira observed. "No doubt I *am* foolish, and a letter from him is probably on the way; but if I were only in Paris I could learn something."

"How could you learn anything more if you were there?"

"Why, from the journals that sent M. Lemontier on his expedition, of course."

"Then why not cable for news to the office of those journals?"

Moira sprung up, and flung her arms impulsively around the speaker.

"What a happy inspiration!" she cried. "And what an idiot I have been not to think of it before! I will send a cable at once to *L'Illustration*, and sign the message with my own name. I am sure they haven't forgotten Moira Deschanel in Paris yet."

So the cable carried a message from Moira

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Deschanel to the office of *L'Illustration* in Paris, inquiring for news of the artist, Royall Harcourt, with M. Lemontier in Africa; and the sender of the message schooled herself to patience while waiting for an answer.

Before this time the Granger household had transferred itself back to Baltimore; and immediately on her return Mrs. Granger had written to Governor Harcourt asking him to come to see them. To this invitation no reply had been received up to the time that the cable message to Paris was sent; and it was on the day following the sending of this message that Moira said:

"If Governor Harcourt is not heard from, or if he does not come soon, I shall have to go away without seeing him; for I *must* return to France."

"I can't understand why he does not let us hear from him," Mrs. Granger said,—“except that, of course, he doesn't know that we have any special reason for wanting to see him; and he's aware that he can now see Robert at any time. But he will certainly answer my note soon; and if you get good news from Paris, there's no reason for your hurrying away."

"There's every reason. I want to be where I can obtain news of Royall. This suspense is too hard to bear."

"But the suspense is not going to last; and I really think you are foolish to be so anxious. I'm sure Royall is quite safe, and you'll get a message very soon telling you so. Ah" (as a servant entered at the moment bearing a telegram on a tray), "there it is, no doubt! What! The message is for me?"

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She took the envelope presented, tore it open, and read aloud:

"Shall be in Baltimore to-day. Will call to see you at four o'clock.

GILBERT HARCOURT.

"Well," she looked up at Moira, "could anything be better arranged? He will come this afternoon, you shall receive him alone, and make your disclosure before he sees any one else,—that is, unless you would like me to be present, to take my share of blame for our plot."

But Moira shook her head, though she had grown perceptibly paler.

"I think that I would rather see him alone," she said, "and take alone whatever blame there may be."

"I don't believe that there will be any. I am sure he will be delighted to welcome you to his house and heart. Don't allow yourself to expect anything else. I shall give orders that he is to be shown at once up to my sitting-room, where you will be ready to give him a cup of tea, as well as news that ought to make him the happiest old gentleman imaginable; for he will be able to say, 'My son that was lost is found again.'"

But Moira made a silencing gesture.

"Don't!" she said. "It is not well to be too confident. We can't tell what he will say, and we don't know whether his son that was lost can be—found again."

It was a few hours later that Governor Harcourt was shown into Mrs. Granger's private sitting-room

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—a charming apartment, where he found Moira waiting for him beside a tea-table attractively set out with china and silver, and an urn softly murmuring over its spirit-lamp. He met her with the utmost cordiality; and was impressed afresh by the grace of her manner and bearing, as she came forward to greet him; and the beauty of her face, with its eyes, of the blue of gloaming seas, shining like jewels under their dark lashes.

"Mrs. Granger will be here in a short time," she told him. "Meanwhile perhaps you will not mind talking to me a little, while I give you a cup of tea."

"Nothing could give me more pleasure," the Governor gallantly assured her, as he sat down and watched her, with the sense of pleasure which a beautiful object always inspires, as she made and handed him his cup of tea. Then he asked about Mr. Granger; and a few minutes were spent in talking of his recovery, and the happy effect which the stay at Atlantic City seemed to have had in restoring his health and strength.

But Moira was too highly keyed for the ordeal before her, and too nervously aware of the danger of possible interruption, to allow the conversation to follow this line very long; and, therefore, she made presently a sudden and, to her companion, very unexpected diversion.

"Have you been noticing the late news from Tripoli?" she asked him abruptly.

Governor Harcourt stared a little. There seemed no reason for the intrusion of Tripoli into the conversation; but he replied that he had noticed the news,

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and thought the conduct of the Italians thoroughly indefensible.

"Bad enough to have seized the country, on a flimsy pretext, from the Turks," he said; "but simply outrageous to massacre the Arabs as they are doing. What has occurred seems to have been not so much fighting as murder. My sympathies are all with the Arabs. How are yours?"

"Mine are with the Arabs, too," she answered; "though I'm afraid I haven't thought a great deal about—them. You see, I have a—a personal interest in the situation."

"Oh, have you?" His tone became more interested, though he also looked a little surprised; for in all their intercourse up to this time Miss Fortescue had carefully avoided any personal allusions, and now she brought one into the conversation without any apparent necessity for doing so. "I hope," he added courteously, "that it is not an interest so—er—close as to cause you anxiety?"

"It has caused and still causes me *great* anxiety," she replied, while he saw a flood of color rise to her clear, pale cheeks, and then as quickly recede again. "Wherever there are conditions of war, there is danger even for those who are not immediately connected with the conflicting forces; and—and there is some one who may be in Tripoli——"

"Some one who has evidently been fortunate enough to inspire a very deep interest in you," the Governor said, as she hesitated and paused. "But if, as you seem to imply, he is neither an Italian nor an Arab, there doesn't appear to be much reason for anxiety."

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"He is certainly neither an Italian nor an Arab," she said. "He is—an American. He is the—artist who accompanied M. Lemontier into Morocco, two or three months ago."

There was a moment's silence,—a moment which was required for Governor Harcourt to take in the meaning of what he had heard, and fully comprehend it. Then the blood mounted to his face, as if he had received a blow; and every line of his features seemed to harden, as he looked with eyes full of sudden suspicion at the girl before him.

"I suppose," he said at length, very coldly, "that you are speaking of my son, who went into Morocco at the time you mention, with the person whom you have named. Having gone there, I do not understand how he can be in Tripoli."

"He is in Tripoli, or at least there is reason to believe that he is there," Moira answered; "because M. Lemontier had a hint in advance of what was about to occur, and hastened from French Africa in order to be in the city before the Italians attacked it; and, of course, Roy—your son went with him."

"How do you know all this?" Governor Harcourt demanded, his gaze fixed on her with increasing suspicion.

"I know it," she replied, "because I——"

And then she paused abruptly; for at this moment the door opened and a servant entered, bearing on a silver card-tray a telegraphic dispatch, which he brought up to her, saying that Mrs. Granger had directed him to bring it in, and that she had signed for it.

"Very well," Moira answered, taking the dispatch

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from the tray; but she did not open it until the door had closed behind the man's retreating figure. Then, tearing the envelope quickly across, she drew out and read the message within; while Governor Harcourt, watching her, remained silent, with a cold sense of deepening apprehension at his heart.

It became something more than apprehension, however, when after a minute she looked up and met his eyes, her own filled with a look of anguish there was no mistaking. Instinctively he rose to his feet, as a man rises to face calamity.

"What is it?" he asked sharply. "Does that" (he pointed to the message with a shaking hand) "contain news of my son?"

"Yes," she answered, with a quietness which surprised herself, "it contains news of him. It is from Paris, from the office of the journal that sent him to Africa, and it says—it says——"

"Yes, what does it say?"

"That he has disappeared, that no one knows where he is, or what has become of him,—that he is—O my God!—that he is—*lost!*"

With that last word, which was a piercing cry of anguish, her head fell forward upon her arms, extended on the tea-table, and she lay motionless, as if fainting.

Governor Harcourt stood, equally motionless for another minute, looking down at the lovely dark head, over which some rays of sunshine streamed and danced, as if in mockery of its grief. Then he said in a tone so stern and authoritative that it commanded reply:

"Miss Fortescue, what is my son to you?"

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His question rang out on the stillness of the room like a challenge, and as a challenge Moira answered it. Lifting her head, she also rose, and, standing—tall, slender, and white as a lily,—faced him.

“When I tell you who I am,” she said in her thrilling voice, “you will know what your son is to me. I am not Miss Fortescue. I am Moira Deschanel,—Moira Harcourt,—I am your son’s wife.”

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN Mrs. Granger, who meanwhile had been suffering from curiosity and suspense in their most acute form, finally received a message requesting her presence in the room where Moira and Governor Harcourt were together, she went with outward boldness, but an inwardly quaking heart, not knowing how far she might be called upon to account for her share in the plot which was now revealed.

But the expression of the two faces that turned toward her as she entered the room told her at once that something of a more startling nature than even the revelation of Moira's identity had occurred. Instinctively she glanced at the cable dispatch which lay on the tea-table; but, before she could ask a question, Governor Harcourt, who had risen to greet her, spoke.

"Well, Emily," he said (and, although he made a gallant effort to preserve composure, she saw that he was deeply agitated), "I find that you have been practising a rather unjustifiable deception upon me——"

"For your own good, my dear Governor," she interrupted eagerly. "There was no other way of making you believe what a charming daughter-in-law you have gained. But seeing is believing, you know."

"Seeing is certainly believing in this case," he acknowledged; "and for that much I am indebted to you. But I blame you for maintaining the deception

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so long. You should have told me who this young lady was as soon as I *had* seen her."

"You don't realize how obstinately prejudiced you were!" she cried, in self-defence. "For that reason I thought it best for you to see as much as possible of her before you learned who she saw. It hasn't been her fault that you were not told long ago," she added hastily. "I take the whole responsibility, for she acted on my advice."

But here Moira interposed.

"I can't let you take the whole responsibility, dear Mrs. Granger," she said. "The fault was also mine; and I see now—oh, very, very clearly!—that I should never have attempted the deception in the first place, nor maintained it so long in the second."

Governor Harcourt turned toward her.

"There was no reason for maintaining it so long," he repeated; "but there was reason enough for attempting it in the first place, since I confess that I was so prejudiced—obstinately prejudiced, as Emily says—that there was probably no other way of convincing me that I was wrong. I am terribly punished for my obstinacy," he added; "for it has been the direct cause of the danger in which my son is now——"

"No, no!" Again Moira interposed,—this time impulsively, almost passionately. "I am the cause of his danger as much as, or more than, you are. I should never have married him without knowing more than I did of his position toward you; for there can be no blessing on a marriage which lacks a parent's consent. And then when, as a result of our marriage, he had gone away, I should have come to

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you as soon as I reached America, and told you who I was, instead of hesitating, and playing with the situation. If I had been brave enough to do this, we could have summoned him to come home, and he might have left Morocco a month ago, and not been led into going to Tripoli."

"And, again, he might not have done anything of the kind," Mrs. Granger put in quickly. "You know as well as I that Royall has his full share of Harcourt obstinacy, and I don't believe that any summons would have brought him home while that Frenchman with whom he went to Morocco remained there. And as to his being in danger in Tripoli, I can't see why you should fear——"

She broke off abruptly, as Moira, taking the dispatch from the table, handed it to her.

There was silence in the room while she read it, and when she looked up her face had grown pale.

"This is—terrible!" she gasped. "What can it mean? How could Royall have—disappeared?"

"That is what we have to find out," Governor Harcourt said. "I am going immediately to set every possible wire at work. The first thing to do is to cable to the office which sent that message, and ask for further news. You" (he looked at Moira) "had better write the dispatch, since it must, of course, be written in French. Then," he added, addressing Mrs. Granger, as Moira turned to a desk near by to write, "the next step will be to communicate, through the Department of State in Washington, with the American Consul in Tripoli,—I suppose there must be a Consul there. I don't know what else to do; but Paul will know, and I am going to him at once."

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"Why not call him to come and consult with you here?" Mrs. Granger asked—and then could have bitten her tongue for asking.

"I spoke of that," the Governor answered; "but Miss For—that is, Moira begged me not to do so. She feels that she would prefer not to meet him until he has learned who she is. So I am going to tell him."

"Yes," said Mrs. Granger, conscious of being extremely sorry for Paul Lyndon, and wondering how much his uncle knew or suspected of his feeling for Moira. It was certainly a painful situation for the two who would have to meet in familiar association after the disclosure was made; and she did not wonder that, even in this supreme moment of anxiety, Moira had thought sufficiently of the man, to whom the revelation of her true identity would be so great a blow, to protest against his being brought into her presence to receive it. But she had little thought just then to bestow on Paul Lyndon and the shock he was about to receive; for the news about Royall was of so absorbing a nature that it was difficult to think of anything else. The dispatch from the office of *L'Illustration* was brief, yet sufficiently explicit, stating simply that M. Lemontier reported from Tripoli the sudden and mysterious disappearance of M. Harcourt,—who had gone to one of the outposts; and, after an attack by Arabs on the Italian troops there, had not been heard of. On these bare facts there was, of course, no comment made; but a promise was added to send any further news that should be received.

Moira's message in reply, which she now brought

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and read to Governor Harcourt, begged that the journal would endeavor to obtain information by every means possible; and would ask M. Lemontier to communicate directly with her, and to send an exact statement of the details of Royall's disappearance, and of all that had been done to find him; adding that expense was not to be considered.

"I should have added that in any event," she said, looking up at Governor Harcourt, after reading the last words; "but I suppose that you will endorse it?"

"Yes, yes!" he answered hurriedly. "It is a point which cannot be too strongly emphasized. There is no expense which I should not be willing and glad to incur."

"But we need not depend on M. Lemontier alone for information," Moira went on. "There is the French Consul at Tripoli, to whom I have a right to apply for help, and who, I am sure, will be ready to render it. Had I not better cable to him immediately?"

"It is a good suggestion," the Governor answered. "But suppose you wait to send your message to him until I have seen and consulted Paul? He has a wonderfully clear head, and will know just what is best to be said. Meanwhile this" (he took the message to *L'Illustration* from her hand) "goes at once. I will take it, and, after showing it to him, send it immediately."

With a hasty gesture he thrust the paper into his pocket, and then held out his hand to the girl before him.

"My dear," he said, "I hardly know how to tell

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you how much I regret the great injustice I have done you in my thoughts, and the great injury I have brought upon you by my conduct. I hope that you will pardon, and—and if you can forget——”

“I have already forgotten everything except your kindness of the last half hour,” Moira interrupted, in a tone of exquisite sweetness. “You are very good to forget on your part, and to open your heart to me, as I hope you have done.”

“You have a talisman which must open all hearts,” he told her, as he also opened his arms and, drawing her to him, kissed the lovely brow under the dark, silken hair.

“But there is Paul Lyndon to be reckoned with yet,” Mrs. Granger reminded herself a little later, when she was tempted to feel too much self-gratulation over the Governor’s immediate and uncompromising surrender. “How Moira must be dreading her meeting with him!”

But, as a matter of fact, Moira was not thinking of Paul Lyndon at all: the terrible news she had received, the great anxiety she was enduring about Royall’s fate, banished all thought of him from her mind, as in the words of an Italian proverb, “One nail drives out another.” And, although she had demurred when Governor Harcourt spoke of summoning him, and begged that he might be told who she was before meeting her, she gave no further consideration to his probable feelings, after this point had been gained. Her whole mind was absorbed in consideration of Royall,—of conjectures about what could have become of him, and passionate regret that

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she had left France and put such immense distance between them.

"It was madness to have gone away,—madness!" she said to Mrs. Granger, when they were left alone together. "I should have anticipated something like this,—some imperative need to be near him. Oh, what would I not give to be in Paris now!"

"But if you were in Paris, you would not be much nearer to Tripoli than you are here," Mrs. Granger suggested.

"Oh, infinitely nearer!" Moira said. "It is not merely of physical distance that I am thinking: in Europe one is in the heart of things, within touch of a hundred means of acquiring information, of influencing events. Here one feels so remote, so cut off! I can hardly restrain myself from telegraphing for passage in the first French steamer sailing out of New York."

"And why do you restrain yourself if you are so anxious to go?"

"Because I think of the days at sea, when I should be out of reach of news——"

"You forget the wireless equipment that all ships carry now."

But Moira shook her head.

"I would not be willing to trust to the chance of receiving messages flung out on the air," she said. "I must be where they can come to me direct,—at least until I receive some definite news. If I could only cut myself in two, what I should like would be to go in search of Royall, and at the same time to stay here, to get messages, and, perhaps, to help and comfort his father——"

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"You are an angel to think of desiring to help and comfort *him*," Mrs. Granger told her. "I am very fond of the Governor, but when I remember that this is all his fault——"

"But that is what it is not," Moira interrupted. "It is Royall's fault, and mine also. Oh, we have all been to blame—all of us,—and so we can but suffer together, and pray, pray! I am going out now to pray."

Mrs. Granger was aware that the first impulse of a Catholic when in trouble is to fly to the sanctuary, where the Divine Presence ever abides; and at another moment she would have been glad of the comfort which she knew that Moira could not fail to find there; but just now she felt bound to utter a protest against her going out.

"I think," she said, "that you had better wait until your hear from the Governor. He is almost certain to want to communicate with you after he has seen Paul Lyndon."

Moira glanced at her in somewhat startled fashion.

"Why should he?" she asked. "I have told him all that I know."

"But he has gone to refer all that you have told him, and all that *he* knows, to Paul, in order to decide what to do; and whatever is decided upon he will wish to refer to you. Don't forget that Paul would have been summoned here, and you would have held a family council together, which would certainly have been best, if you hadn't—er——"

"Objected? Yes, I am sorry; but you know why

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I objected. I was thinking of him—I wanted to spare him——”

“I understand perfectly. But the point is that since, in consequence of your objection, the council is being held elsewhere, you must at least keep yourself in touch with it,—that is, you must remain where you can be consulted at a moment's notice.”

“No doubt you are right,” Moira said, with the charming docility which characterized her. “Since it is my fault that the council, as you call it, is not held here, I must at least remain where I can be consulted easily.”

“That is just it. And as for your desire to ascribe everything to your fault,—I wonder if you don't think that it is your fault that Governor Harcourt is a particularly obstinate and prejudiced old gentleman, and that Paul Lyndon has at last discovered that he is not as infallible as he has always fancied himself!”

“I don't need,” Moira said sadly, “to imagine things to be my fault, when there are so many that plainly cannot be ascribed to anything else.”

“I don't know any that can't be ascribed to something else,” Mrs. Granger returned. “For instance, it has been Paul Lyndon's fault, much more than yours, that he has not learned who you really are. If he had not behaved so badly—that is, desired to behave so badly—when he was abroad, we would have told him the truth.”

“What he desired to do did not make it less obligatory to tell him the truth,” Moira replied. “I know that now, as I know many other things that it is too late to do more than regret—ah, but *regret!*”

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She moved away, a pale image of grief; and, with hands clasped before her, and eyes widely gazing as if at some distant, tragic vision, began to pace back and forth across the room, with the long, sweeping step and unconscious grace of the born actress,—of one, that is, whose natural impulse was to express emotion in dramatic action. Mrs. Granger watched her silently for some time, fascinated as well as sympathetic; for she said to herself that she had never before realized the capability of expression in the human face and form, when suddenly they were both startled by the most nerve-racking sound of what is called civilization—the telephone bell.

Moirra turned quickly and took the receiver from the instrument that was standing on a table.

"Yes," she said, "this is Moirra." Then for a minute she was silent, listening intently, and frowning slightly as she listened; and then: "Yes," she said again. "I understand. Tell him to come. Yes, I am ready to see him immediately."

She replaced the receiver on its hook, and turned to Mrs. Granger.

"That was Governor Harcourt speaking," she said; "and he tells me that Paul Lyndon wishes to come and let me know what they have decided to do. No doubt he will be here very soon."

"As soon as he can reach the house," Mrs. Granger agreed. "It is what I expected. But I am sorry that he thinks it necessary to come. He ought to know that you would rather not meet him——"

"You are mistaken," Moirra interrupted quickly. "I have not the least disinclination to meet him. I was not thinking of myself when I did not want him

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summoned, but only of him, because he didn't know then whom he would have been coming to meet. But now he knows, and we shall think only of Royall and Royall's danger."

"Hum—er—yes," said Mrs. Granger. "Well, I will efface myself, and give orders that as soon as he arrives he shall be shown up."

She left the room in haste, fearful lest her tongue should prove an unruly member, and betray her into the expression of her conviction that Lyndon would be likely to think of a good deal beside Royall and Royall's danger when he found himself in the presence of the woman who had entered so deeply into his inmost life. Remembering some of the words he had spoken to her, Mrs. Granger's heart was filled with pity for him; but she did not wish to be led to utter this to Moira, or to say anything that would tend to make the inevitable meeting more painful.

"Happily, she isn't thinking of herself or of him or of anybody or anything but Royall," Mrs. Granger reflected; "and I only hope that Paul will be able to appreciate this, and to rise to the same plane. Perhaps he may: it is certainly fine of him to sink his own feeling so immediately in the need to consider how best to work for his cousin's rescue,—that is, if it is for this reason alone that he is coming."

She felt rather ashamed of entertaining the last doubt, which insinuated itself quite unbidden into her mind; but she might have felt that there was some ground for it, if she had caught a glimpse of Paul Lyndon's face when he presently arrived and was shown up to the sitting-room, where Moira was awaiting him.

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Moira, at least, had no doubt of the feeling which possessed him when she turned, at the opening of the door, and found herself looking into a countenance which was like a white marble mask in its sternly set lines, with a fire of anger and resentment burning in the deep, gray eyes. The message of those eyes was so clear that she unconsciously stood still, as one who waits attack; while he, on his part, also paused as the door closed behind him. So for a moment they faced each other silently, like adversaries in a duel; and it was finally Moira who spoke first, answering the indignant reproach of the burning eyes.

"I wonder," she said, "if you will believe that I am—sorry?"

"Sorry!" he echoed, in a tone of intense scorn. "Why should you be sorry for your success? What you intended—which was, no doubt, to punish and humiliate me—you have accomplished in the most thorough manner. You are to be congratulated upon the admirable and truly actress-like skill with which you carried through your deception, and paid off your score against me."

"Ah" (it was a cry that seemed to come from the depth of her heart), "do not be so bitter! For, indeed, I had never a thought of punishing and humiliating you, or of paying off any score."

"Why, then, had you not pity enough for my hopeless infatuation to tell me the truth about yourself,—the truth which was owing to me from every point of view?"

"I only waited to tell you until I had told one to whom it seemed due that he should hear it first,"

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she answered. "And if I seemed to wait a long time it was because I was anxious to make the revelation in a manner that would wound you least. But while I delayed, the matter has been taken out of my hands; and now—now I can only beg you to believe that I am sorry, and that if I could have foreseen such a result of my masquerade I would never have attempted it. I regret my folly more than I can say; and you may be satisfied to know that I am severely punished——"

"I have no desire that you should be punished on my account," he said abruptly. "I know that you are suffering from terrible anxiety at present, and I do not wish to add to your suffering by reproaches, or by intruding anything that I may feel upon your attention. I have not come to see you for that purpose,—at least it was not my chief purpose in coming," he added, with a strict truthfulness which at another time might have been amusing. "I have come to talk to you of Royall, to tell you what his father and I have decided that it is best to do——"

"Yes, yes, let us speak of Royall!" she cried. "Let us forget everything but thought of him, and work together to find him. Tell me what you think of this awful news—what you believe has happened to him."

"Sit down," he said coldly, but not unkindly, as he drew forward a chair. "You look pale enough to faint." Then, as she sank into the offered seat, he sat down opposite her and answered her question. "It is difficult to know what to think," he said, "except that there is reason to fear that something very serious has happened to him. We know so little—only the bare fact of his disappearance,—but

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the disturbed condition of the country seems to make it certain that he must be either a prisoner, or——”

“Yes?”

“Or dead. I can see no alternative.”

There was silence for a moment; and, pale as she had been before, it seemed to him that she grew yet paler. But she did not lose her self-control, though she shrank visibly at his words.

“I, too, have been trying to find an alternative,” she said at length, “and I cannot. If he were free, Royall would let me hear from him,—of so much I am sure. So he must be a prisoner, for I do not believe that he is dead.”

Lyndon regarded her with a growing compassion.

“It is natural that you should not wish to believe it,” he answered.

“It is not only that I do not wish to believe it,” she said quickly: “it is that I have a conviction that he is alive. The feeling is quite indescribable, and I don’t expect you to give any weight to it. But it means a great deal to me; for I have had many such spiritual convictions in my life, and they have never been wrong. Something seems to tell me that Royall is living, though perhaps in great danger; and yet it is hard to see why he should be——”

“Where war exists any one may be in danger,” Lyndon said. “And, this being so, every means must be taken to discover what has become of him. I have already communicated with the Department of State in Washington. And meanwhile I think it will be well for you to apply to the French Consul in Tripoli, as my uncle says you have thought of doing——”

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"I will send a message to him at once. Will you help me to write it?"

"In a moment." A gesture of his hand bade her keep the seat from which she started to rise. "Let me finish telling you what we have decided to do. Briefly, it is that, while my uncle and yourself remain here and work through all possible official channels, I shall go in personal search of Royall."

"You mean that you will go to Tripoli?"

"Yes, to Tripoli, as fast as I can get there."

"Oh!" She leaned forward eagerly, clasping her hands. "It is what I have longed to do. I will go also."

But the words had hardly left her lips when she realized, even before the expression of Lyndon's face told her, how impossible it would be for him and her to go together even in search of Royall. She sank back in her chair as he said hurriedly:

"It is unnecessary that we should both go. If you wish to go yourself—if you prefer to do so,—I will remain with my uncle. But we thought that it would be best for me to go, since I am a man, and—and there may be things to deal with which it would be difficult for you to manage."

She did not answer for a minute, and he saw that she was having a severe struggle with herself before she could answer at all. Every impulse of her nature was bidding her insist upon her right to go, was making her rebel against remaining behind inactive, while some one else took the active part in finding Royall. But the unselfishness and reasonableness that were the basis of her character finally asserted themselves in this crucial moment, as they

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had asserted themselves often before; and, by asserting, gained the strength which was needed now. Keenly aware of what she was feeling, Lyndon felt himself moved to sudden and unexpected surprise when she looked at him and said:

"I will do whatever Governor Harcourt and yourself think best; and—and I can see that it *will* be best that you should go. You will be able to do more than I could—unless I should meanwhile hear that Royall needs me. In that case you may look to see me in Tripoli almost as soon as you are."

"That," he said gravely, "is what I would expect."

CHAPTER XXII

THE days which followed Paul Lyndon's departure for Tripoli were days not soon to be forgotten by any of those who were so immediately and deeply concerned in Royall's fate. The intense anxiety which filled their minds obscured all thought of anything else for Moira and Governor Harcourt; but Mrs. Granger, who was keenly alive to all the different phases of the situation, confided to her husband that her lifelong desire to "live in a drama" had never been so fully realized.

"I could never have imagined anything half so dramatic as the various things I'm in touch with at this moment," she declared. "Here's the mystery of Royall's fate, who seems to have disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him; here's the poor Governor's suffering and remorse, and his pathetic clinging to Moira—have you ever, by the way, seen anything quite so complete as his surrender?—here's Paul Lyndon gone off with a broken heart——"

"Oh, tut, tut!" Mr. Granger broke in. "Don't let your sense of drama run away with you. I'm sure that Paul Lyndon hasn't anything like a broken heart, though I told you it was a rather cruel experiment——"

"It wasn't an experiment at all. Nobody ever dreamed of the possibility of his falling in love with Moira, but he has certainly accomplished it in the

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most complete manner. I've no doubt he was glad to go in search of Royall, in order to escape from association with her; though, of course, that doesn't mean that he wouldn't have gone under any circumstances."

"I'm glad you do him so much justice."

"I've never done him anything but justice; and I've the very deepest sympathy for him, and for his mother also. Yes" (answering a look of interrogation), "I'm quite sure that she knows all about Paul's feeling for Moira; and, naturally enough, she can't forgive her."

"Now, why should you say 'naturally enough,' when you insist that nobody was to blame in the matter?"

"As if being to blame made any difference in the things people don't forgive! But, from Mrs. Lyndon's point of view, Moira is so far to blame that if she hadn't come here under an assumed name Paul wouldn't have met her in a way that allowed him to fall in love with her. That's quite true, you know; and, therefore, we can't wonder at the mother's resentment. But Moira is so conscious of this resentment that it is the chief reason why she will not yield to the Governor's insistent request that she shall take her place in his house as Royall's wife. She tells him that she does not want to go to the Manor until she can go there with Royall; and that, in the present uncertainty, she would rather stay with me, while I am certainly glad to keep her. It's rather odd," the speaker added meditatively, "that I should be glad; for, human nature being what it is, people in trouble are usually anything but desirable guests."

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"Oh, come!" Mr. Granger protested. "Isn't that rather cynical?"

"Isn't it true? We are sincerely sorry for our friends when they are in grief and anxiety, but we are distinctly not desirous of their society. But Moira is as different in that as in other things from most people. Her anxiety doesn't make her forget others, and she is as charmingly ready to forget herself as she ever was. She draws the line only at making acquaintances; and people are simply wild to see and meet her, now that her story is known."

"I should say so! Why, I can't go to my club without being bombarded with questions. And as for the newspaper men, it's a regular fight to hold them off. I never pick up a paper that I don't expect to see the whole story paraded in print."

"The Governor has had influence enough to prevent it up to this time. He gave the news of Royall's disappearance to the reporters, and promised to send more as soon as it is received; but he's made them understand that it must be 'hands off' as far as Moira is concerned."

"I'm not sure that it mightn't be well to let the truth be published," Mr. Granger remarked. "There are so many wild stories afloat about the marriage! I've had the most—er—extraordinary questions asked me."

"The only thing to do is to answer them with a statement of the exact facts. That is what I've been doing lately. I can't walk down the street without having to stop and give a history of the *affaire* Harcourt half a dozen times before I reach my destina-

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tion. But people want to see the heroine and she goes nowhere but to church."

"Poor soul! I hope she gets some comfort there."

"Oh, she does! To realize that, you've only to observe the difference in the expression of her face when she goes and when she comes back. I asked her the other day how it was that she had such an uplifted look when she returned; and she said something quite mystical about having been in the presence of God, who saw Royall as clearly as He saw her, and made her feel that He was abundantly able to take care of him."

Mr. Granger whistled softly.

"It's a good thing that she has such faith and courage," he said; "for nobody seems to think that there's a chance for Royall's safety, and probably we shall never know what has become of him. Anything might happen out there in the desert; and the hardest part of the tragedy is going to be the long waiting for news, and the slow dying of hope."

Of this there was not a shadow of doubt. The long waiting for news that did not come—for by none of the many means set at work could anything whatever be heard of Royall Harcourt,—and the terrible dying of hope delayed, tried the endurance of those who loved him. Governor Harcourt bore himself with courage under the strain, but his friends remarked sympathetically that he appeared to age daily; while his only source of comfort seemed to be the society of Moira, who found a certain degree of relief from her own anxiety in the effort to encourage and sustain him. His sister, who did little beside lament, and whose woebegone countenance

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almost drove him frantic, he avoided as much as possible; while he could not see enough of the girl, who buoyed his spirit by the brave strength of her own, and who refused to surrender hope even when the prolonged passage of time without news of any kind seemed to make hope useless.

"What influence is it that sustains you?" Governor Harcourt asked Moira one day, when he had been most cast down, and she had cheered and encouraged him. "I have never seen any one so brave."

"It is only trust in the good God," she told him simply. "I have begged Him to take care of Royall, and I am perfectly certain that He will do so."

"My poor child!" the Governor said, almost pityingly. "How can you be certain when you know what terrible things are happening every day to people who also trust in the—er—good God, as you call the Almighty?"

"I am certain," she answered, "because if one really trusts Him, even terrible things are robbed of their terror in one way or another."

He frowned a little as he looked at her.

"Now, what do you mean by that?" he asked.

"What I mean is this," she answered gently: "that, so far as Royall is concerned, for instance, I am sure that wherever he is, God will *take care of him*. I have prayed—I pray constantly—that he may be brought back to us, that our agony of anxiety and fear may be ended by his safe return; but, above all, I pray that he may be taken care of wherever he may be,—in other words, that what is best for him may happen; and I have a great sense of security that this

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will be done. So I must be hopeful. If I despaired, I should distrust God, you see."

Her companion stared at her wonderingly.

"I have never known such faith," he said. "And if—if we never hear what has become of him? Can your faith bear that?"

She paled, but answered steadily:

"It must bear it. And it doesn't follow that I must know how God has taken care of him. I must only believe that He never deserted any one who trusted in Him. So even if we never hear of Royall again, I shall believe that God has taken care of him. But I have a feeling that we shall hear of him, and I trust this feeling because it is never so strong as when I am kneeling before the tabernacle."

The Governor had only a faint idea of what she meant by "kneeling before the tabernacle"; but he saw the light on her face which Mrs. Granger had called "mystical," and he said for the hundredth time:

"My dear, you are the greatest comfort that I have! I don't deserve in the least that you should be——"

But here she interrupted him by slipping her hand into his.

"You deserve everything from me,—everything!" she told him passionately. "And it is the greatest comfort *I* have to be able to help you. Nothing else keeps me here. If it were not for you, I should be on my way to look for Royall. I feel" (a little wildly) "that, even as it is, I shall have to leave you and go in search of him, if we do not hear anything of him very soon."

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"No, no!" He held her hand as tightly as if she were threatening to leave at the moment. "You must not go. There is nothing to be gained by your going. What could you do that Paul isn't better able to accomplish? You've no idea how able and resourceful Paul is. And it's no place for a woman—that dreadful Tripoli, where slaughter seems raging."

"Any place is the place for a woman where she can help those she loves. And I might be able to do more even than Paul."

"My dear, that is impossible!"

"At least it would be a relief to try,—not to sit here idle and useless. Ah, you don't know how hard I have to fight my desire to go! Some day the impulse will be beyond my strength to resist, and I shall go."

"Perhaps we shall hear something before that day comes," the Governor said, with an attempt at hopefulness.

But it was hardly more than an attempt; for Lyndon had now reached Tripoli, and his messages were anything but reassuring. It appeared that neither the Italian authorities in command of the city nor the Frenchmen of Royall's party could throw the least light upon his disappearance, or find a clue by which to search for him. It was only certain that he was not in the hospitals, and that no one was able to say that he had been identified among the dead. But there was the strong probability that he might have been buried unidentified; and, for the rest, the vast, mysterious, hostile desert—that desert into which no Italian soldier dared venture beyond reach

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of the guns of his battleships—kept its secret, and yielded no hint of the fate of the man who had so rashly ventured into it.

For so much had now been learned—that he had gone beyond the farthest Italian outpost, and never returned. He had ridden away, toward one of the oases near at hand, and supposed to be thoroughly peaceful; and that night the desert had sent its warriors to attack the outpost of the alien forces, which had retaliated so fiercely; and, in the midst of the wild carnage that ensued, all trace of Royall Harcourt seemed as utterly lost as if the sands of the desert had engulfed him.

Beyond this scanty knowledge Lyndon seemed unable to advance, although it was clear that he spared no effort to obtain some ray of light upon his cousin's fate. But the sullen and resentful attitude of the Arabs, after the massacres which shocked the world, made inquiries outside of Tripoli almost impossible. By such channels as were possible, however, word was sent far and wide into the desert that a foreigner (not an Italian) had disappeared, and that a large reward would be paid for any news of him.

But hope deferred not only makes the heart sick with that deadly and unutterable sickness which is like no other of life, but after a while dies down into despair. And so it was dying in the hearts of those who loved Royall Harcourt, when a message was suddenly flashed across the world:

"Have found a clue at last. Have faint hope that Royall is living, and am going out into the desert to look for him. Have written at length.

"PAUL LYNDON."

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So the message ran; and when Governor Harcourt hastened to carry it to Moira, they looked into each other's eyes almost incredulously. Hope had been so near to death that it was hard for it to revive; and there was the danger, always present in such cases, that if it did revive, it would only be to suffer a more crushing disappointment.

"I am almost sorry that he sent the message," Governor Harcourt said; "for it tells so little, and we have so long to wait until we can hear again. And if he has gone out into the desert, we must be anxious, too, about *him*; for it can't be other than a great risk that he has taken. It will be an awful judgment upon me if both of my boys should perish there."

"They will not perish," Moira assured him, with a fervor that seemed inspired. "Paul will find Royall and bring him back. Oh, I am sure of it! And I shall pray harder even than I have prayed before that they may both be restored to you."

"To me!" He looked at her in amazement. "You seem to think more of me than of yourself."

"I must do so," she said; "for you have now a double stake, and I can never forget that it is my fault that you have any at all."

And this was her attitude throughout the terrible days which followed,—a forgetfulness of herself that was wonderful, and a remembrance of him that was equally wonderful. And at last, to break the silence, there came the letter which Lyndon in his message had spoken of writing. It was addressed to his uncle, and said:

"I have at last obtained a clue to Royall's fate,

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and a gleam of hope, which has come in the most unexpected manner. My persistent inquiries about him are known to all Europeans here, and I received to-day a summons from one of the Franciscan Fathers, who have remained in their monastery, here. I went at once, and found a man of the most attractive manner and bearing—evidently in the past a thorough man of the world,—who told me that, through an Arab convert who had long been with them, he had received news of a foreigner—a Frenchman, it was thought,—who was held as a prisoner far out on the oases. His (this prisoner's) life would not have been worth an hour's purchase if he had been an Italian, but the Arabs were quite certain that he was not that. He had come to them as a Frenchman (of this they seemed sure), had been with them in their attack upon the Italian outpost, which was a matter that it was necessary to keep very secret; and—a point that inclines me more than anything else to fear that it may not be Royall—he was wearing a kind of religious charm, or amulet, which the Arab recognized as a Catholic emblem; and which induced him to bring it, and news of the man, to the Fathers. I saw this thing, which the Franciscan tells me is called an *Agnus Dei*——”

“Ah!” It was a sudden cry from Moira. “Thank God!—O thank God! I believe that proves it is Royall; for my last act when we parted was to hang an *Agnus Dei* around his neck and make him promise that he would always wear it.”

The Governor stared at her with eyes full of dawning hope.

“I don't know what an *Agnus Dei* is,” he said;

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"but it will be matter for great gratitude if it leads to his identification, and if Paul can only reach him. He has gone out into the desert at his own risk, by the advice of this Franciscan Father, and under the guidance of the Arab who brought the—er—charm——"

"It isn't a charm: it is a religious emblem, to preserve the wearer from bodily and spiritual harm, by the particular blessing of God."

"Well," said the Governor, who on another occasion would have been likely to speak of this as "superstition," "I hope and trust that it may prove to have done so. Through the Fathers and the Arabs Paul has a much better hope of succeeding in his quest than if he had the Italian army behind him. He says that distinctly. He also says that he has gone well provided with money, and so——"

"And so," Moira ended, "we must just wait and hope and pray."

So they waited and hoped and prayed. Even the Governor learned to pray in those woeful days. He clung to Moira so closely that he often went to church with her, and sat beside her, quiet as a child, while she poured forth her prayers before the tabernacle, at which he looked with a pathetic ignorance, and a pathetic trust that there was Something behind the golden door, on which the lamplight played, that could hear and answer him. *Agnus Dei!* The name seemed to fascinate him. It might be superstition—he was not sure of that,—but it was at least beautiful and appropriate that, by the little waxen emblem of the Lamb of God, his son should have been found, and, perhaps, brought back to him.

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Weeks passed, however; and, with their passing, hope again grew faint and sick, and again Moira felt as if nothing could keep her from flying to Tripoli herself. She had, in fact, almost made her arrangements to go when at last one day the message so long awaited came. It was from Paul Lyndon, and, dated in Tripoli, said:

"Have found Royall and brought him here safely. He is fairly well, and we shall sail for home tomorrow."

CHAPTER XXIII

IT WAS only after the first wild joy over the news that Royall "who was lost had been found again" had subsided, that Moira and Governor Harcourt, looking at each other, with a simultaneous impulse, said: "Why is there no word from Royall himself?"

It was a question which sent a chill to their hearts. What had happened, what could possibly have happened, to keep him from sending a single word to allay their anxiety, and to express to Moira his happiness at the prospect of seeing her again? "What can it mean?" they asked each other; and repeated the question again and yet again as the days went on,—days which were, indeed, longer and harder to live through than any which had preceded them. Other messages came from Lyndon—one from Malta and another from Naples, whence, he said, they were sailing for New York on one of the Mediterranean liners,—and each spoke reassuringly of Royall's condition. But from Royall himself no word came; no message broke the silence, which seemed to grow more ominous and mysterious as the sense of its strangeness deepened.

"What can it mean?" Moira would say to Mrs. Granger. "He is alive; he has come out of terrible danger; he is, Paul Lyndon says, 'fairly well'; and yet he sends no message of any kind either to his father or to me. What am I to think of this?"

For once Mrs. Granger found herself unable to

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suggest what could be thought of it,—being, in fact, altogether overcome by the mystery of the situation; for even if Royall were incapacitated from saying anything for himself, what could prevent Lyndon from making some explanation concerning the cause of his silence?

"I sometimes wonder," Moira went on, "if, perhaps, he is angry with me for having disobeyed his injunctions about approaching his father. But it is not like Royall to show anger in such a manner,—at least, not like the Royall whom I have known."

"It is impossible to believe that can be the reason of his silence," Mrs. Granger declared. "It would be too unreasonable and too ungrateful. What you have done has not only been from the best motives, but has achieved the best results. The Governor is perfectly devoted to you—he talked to me for an hour yesterday about how charming he finds you,—and Royall has you, and you alone, to thank if he is once more welcomed as a son in his father's house."

"Then perhaps he has learned in some way of Paul Lyndon's unfortunate infatuation, and thinks possibly that it was my fault."

"How could he learn of it except through Paul Lyndon? And you know *that's* impossible."

"I suppose it is," Moira said slowly. "But this silence is so strange that it tries me almost more than anything that has gone before. There seems something menacing in it,—as if some terrible blow were held suspended over me. And instead of rejoicing, as I should be, that every day is bringing him nearer, I find myself shrinking—fearing——"

"You poor child! What a terrible ordeal it has

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been for you, and how wonderfully you have borne it!"

She shook her head.

"I have not borne it wonderfully at all,—rather very poorly. And now pray for me, that I may not fail utterly under whatever is coming to meet me. For I feel sure that something dreadful has happened to Royall; and if it is only not something that will alienate and divide him from me——"

"My dear, be reasonable! How could whatever has happened to him alienate or divide him from you?"

"I can't tell," Moira replied, a little wildly; "but there is the fact: he has come out of terrible danger, out of the very jaws of death, *and he has not sent one word to me!*"

There was, indeed, this strange fact facing them all,—a fact full of perplexity and uneasiness for Governor Harcourt and Mrs. Granger, as well as for Moira herself. The first two talked it over between themselves, without arriving at any plausible explanation whatever. For there were Lyndon's messages, with their exasperating uncertainty of phrase—"Royall is fairly well," "Royall is doing well,"—but not a word to explain why Royall was unable to say anything for himself.

"It is a mystery which can be solved only by Royall himself when he comes," the Governor would finally say.

And Mrs. Granger would reply impatiently:

"But there isn't any reason why Paul Lyndon shouldn't have solved it by a word, and spared us all this worry of conjecture; and that poor child, who

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is breaking her heart over the silence, such agony of doubt."

"Of course, he might have done so," the Governor admitted; "but for some reason he hasn't."

"Yes, it is very clear that he hasn't. But *why?* I certainly wish that he had been at once more considerate and more explicit."

"I wish so, too. But I've no doubt he has acted according to his best judgment; and one can generally rely on Paul's judgment."

"I wish that I had as much confidence in anything on earth as you have in Paul's judgment," Mrs. Granger permitted herself to observe, with considerable acerbity of tone.

Meanwhile there was another person who during these days of uncertainty shared his uncle's confidence in Paul's judgment. This was Mrs. Lyndon, who, finding herself unable to forgive Moira for the masquerade which had brought about her son's unhappy attachment, was now firmly persuaded that the real cause of the silence which was puzzling everybody so deeply was that Royall had discovered something concerning his wife which had alienated him from her. She was under the impression that this was her own idea, and was not aware that it had been insinuated into her mind by Miss Elinor Fane, who, having nothing else to do, just then, was staying at the Manor as companion for her during the Governor's prolonged absence in Baltimore.

"He has become so infatuated with that girl—though heaven only knows what it is all these men find so fascinating in her!—that he wants to be with her as much as possible, and even wishes me to close

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the house here and come to the city with him," Mrs. Lyndon had told Miss Fane. "But that's more than I can think of doing. I suppose I shall have to recognize her after Royall comes; but I don't mean to do so before, for I consider her conduct in coming here under a false name as most unprincipled."

Her listener nodded a blonde head in assenting reprobation.

"I didn't see how you could regard it in any other light," she observed. "It seemed to me quite dreadfully unprincipled. But one could hardly expect anything else from a French actress, could one?"

Mrs. Lyndon was very sure that *she* would not have expected anything else, and hinted darkly of conduct even more reprehensible.

"She seems to have a truly frightful power of attracting men," she said; "the power that—er—kind of women often have, you know."

Miss Fane nodded again.

"Yes, I know. She's of the siren type," she said. "I suspected it as soon as I met her that day at Emily Granger's; and I suspected who she was, too. And so the Governor has yielded to her fascinations?"

"My dear, between ourselves, he's a perfect fool about her!" Mrs. Lyndon replied, with the frankness of exasperation. "He talks of her goodness—think of that!—and of her sweetness and cheerfulness,—as if this were a time for cheerfulness!"

"Perhaps it is for her," Miss Fane suggested, "since she has gained what she came for—recognition from the family, with all that recognition implies. By the by, what does Paul think of her?"

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"Oh, Paul!" his mother cried, and then paused,—but too late: her tone had told all that her eager listener wished to know.

Elinor Fane looked at the speaker sharply for an instant, and then threw back her head, with a laugh.

"So Paul is a victim, too!" she said. "Who could have imagined it,—*Paul*, who has always looked with such superior contempt on our poor little attempts at fascination, and has maintained an attitude of such superb indifference to the entire female sex! To fall in love at last with a masquerading actress, and his cousin's wife. Oh, but I call it delicious,—simply *delicious!*"

"My dear" (Mrs. Lyndon was deeply and sincerely shocked), "I don't think you quite realize what you are saying."

"Perhaps not," Miss Fane agreed, suddenly conscious that she had said too much. "I was so struck by the—er—absurdity of the situation——"

"I should hardly call it absurd," Mrs. Lyndon remarked stiffly. "It seems to me, rather, very dreadful; for Paul and Royall have been brought up as brothers, and have always associated as brothers. And for this thing to come between them now is a terrible misfortune. At least" (she wiped her eyes) "I feel it so."

Elinor Fane sat silent, gazing at her for a moment; and, as she gazed, all sign of amusement vanished from her face, as if the graver possibilities of the situation became apparent to her also. Presently she said in an oddly changed voice:

"I wouldn't be so much distressed, if I were you.

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Things may arrange themselves better than you expect."

"How can they?" Mrs. Lyndon asked despairingly. "When Royall comes, and brings this actress here as his wife, how can Paul ever come any more to the house that has been his home, and how can I stay where I can never see him? Don't you see that nothing can be as it has been before, and that this woman will be a cause of hopeless separation between my boys?"

"Oh, yes, I see it all," the girl answered, "if things come to pass as you expect! But perhaps they may not do so."

It was Mrs. Lyndon's turn to stare a little: the voice of the speaker was still so oddly significant.

"How can they come to pass differently?" she asked. "Royall is on his way home, the woman he has married is already here, my brother has recognized and absolutely fallen in love with her; so, of course, they will come to the Manor at once, and Paul——"

Elinor Fane leaned forward and laid a hand on her arm.

"Never mind about Paul just now," she said. "Only consider this point: Royall is coming home, but he has sent, you tell me, no message to his wife."

"None at all," Mrs. Lyndon assented. "We haven't heard directly from him, but only from Paul. We don't understand exactly why this should be, but I don't know what that——"

"Can have to do with it? Why, it has just this: that something must have occurred to change Royall's feeling toward his wife."

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Mrs. Lyndon stared more widely.

"But how can that be, when they haven't been together?" she asked. "He has been in Africa and she in America."

"In the first place," Miss Fane replied, "we've only her word for the cause of his going to Africa, and that cause may have been altogether different from the one she gives. There may have been a difference between them, he may have found out something about her."

"That's very likely, and I think Paul suspected it. But Emily Granger met them together in Paris, and she says——"

"A five-year-old child of moderate intelligence could fool Mrs. Granger, for all her belief in her own shrewdness," Elinor broke in contemptuously. "But even if she is right, and there was nothing in the way of a difference between them *then*, something may have developed later. You see, Royall has been in Morocco with the French army, and among the officers there he may have met some one who was able to tell him things he didn't know about this alluring actress, who goes about the world making men of all kinds fall in love with her. Once grasp that idea, and you have a reason for all Royall's singular conduct,—for his hiding himself in the desert, and for his curious silence now. And, therefore, it may be that your fears are unnecessary, and that when he returns he will not bring his wife to Harcourt Manor with him."

Silence fell after the last words,—a silence in which Mrs. Lyndon, looking with mingled wonder and admiration at her companion, let the new and

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strange thoughts suggested sink, as it were, into her inner consciousness, which received, adopted, and approved them. Presently she nodded affirmatively.

"That must be the cause," she said meditatively. "There is really no other explanation for anything so strange as Royall's absolute silence. He must have heard something about her when he was in Morocco with the French army, as you say; for, of course, if she has been an actress for years in Paris, she must have known a great many of the officers——"

"There's no telling whom she has or hasn't known," Miss Fane interrupted abruptly. "We know only how she has acted since she has been here—Paul's infatuation is an example in point,—so there's reason to suppose that, from some source, Royall has had revelations which have determined him to have nothing more to do with her. There's no other way of accounting for the fact that he now completely ignores her existence."

"There's no other way," Mrs. Lyndon agreed. "But it is very shocking. What is to be the end if he continues to ignore her? It seems almost worse than what I have feared."

"Do you think so?" (Miss Fane lifted her brows), "when there is so plain a remedy in sight?"

In her old-fashioned simplicity, Mrs. Lyndon stared again.

"What remedy can there be?" she asked. "He is married to her."

The pretty, blonde, Dresden shepherdess laughed.

"And after marriage, what follows?" she queried. "You surely know that the modern answer to that conundrum is—divorce."

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But although the days that elapsed between the date of Paul Lyndon's last dispatch from Naples and that on which the ship on which his cousin and himself had sailed, was due to arrive in New York, were long and hard to live through, they ended at last—as all things do, if we are only patient enough to wait for the ending. It had been settled that Moira and Governor Harcourt should be in New York to meet the returning voyagers on their arrival. But the day before they were to have gone to that city, a sudden and imperative message dropped from the sky—that is, came by wireless telegraphy—to Governor Harcourt, from Paul Lyndon, on board the *S.S. Carpathia*: “Be in New York to meet us,” it said, “but on no account let Moira come.”

This was like a thunderbolt, in its presage of calamity in some unexpected form; and it was a deeply troubled old gentleman who hastened as speedily as possible to Mrs. Granger.

“What on earth is to be made of this?” he burst out, thrusting the dispatch into her hands. “What can it mean? And what are we to do?”

After Mrs. Granger had read the message, she looked up with a countenance as troubled as his own.

“God only knows what it means,” she said. “But there is only one thing to do, and that is to show it to Moira.”

“Show it to Moira!” the Governor almost shouted. “Why, don’t you see what he says?”

“Of course, I see what he says,” Mrs. Granger interrupted; “and I also see that he is more foolish than I should have imagined it possible for Paul Lyn-

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don to be. How does he think that you are to keep her from going to New York, unless you tell her of this? And after you have told her, is it likely that she will consent to remain here while you go?"

"I don't think it *is* likely," the Governor answered; "and, therefore, in my opinion, she shouldn't be told. We should simply find some way of persuading her to stay here with you and let me go alone to New York."

Mrs. Granger surveyed him with something like pitying contempt.

"That certainly sounds very simple," she said. "And what way of persuading her, without any explanation being given, would you suggest?"

"I thought that perhaps you could suggest something," he replied.

She shook her head decidedly.

"I have nothing to suggest," she said, "because there is nothing possible. You could not induce Moira to stay here without telling her the truth. There is a bare possibility that if you tell her the truth she may consent to let you go to New York alone. It is only a possibility, but there is no other. Of that I am quite sure."

The Governor looked at the speaker as helplessly as many another man has looked under similar circumstances, and in the helplessness there was also a certain appeal.

"If you are so sure of it," he said, "would you mind telling her the truth?"

"I wouldn't mind, if by doing so I could spare either her or you anything at all," Mrs. Granger answered. "But I really think that, as matters stand,

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it will be better for you to tell her yourself. It will be very easy. You have only to show her that message; and I can assure you that you needn't fear a scene. She will be very quiet and very reasonable. I have seen her tested in many ways, and I know of what I speak."

"Very well, then." The Governor nerved himself as men nerve themselves to go into battle. "Send for her, if you are so certain that it is the best thing to do. But don't go away yourself," he added, in evident alarm, as Mrs. Granger rose.

"Of course, I'll stay, if you wish it," she said; and, ringing the bell, sent word to Moira that Governor Harcourt desired to see her.

They had only a minute to wait for her appearance. Indeed, it seemed to Governor Harcourt as if almost immediately the door opened, and the tall, graceful figure entered, the lovely face smiling the welcome he had learned to expect.

"My dear," he said, as he rose to meet her, and took the hand she extended in both his own, "I have come this morning to tell you that I—I have arrived at the conclusion that it will be best for me to go alone to New York, and to bring Royall to you here. That will delay the time of your meeting very little, and will be—er—very much more desirable in every respect. I'm sure you'll have confidence enough in my judgment to agree to this?"

He looked at her anxiously, and as he looked he was struck by the penetrating power that seemed to come into the sapphire eyes that met his own. They regarded him for a moment—a moment in which he had a consciousness of being read through and

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through,—and then Moira said as quietly as Mrs. Granger had predicted:

“What news, please, have you heard?”

“News—heard!” The Governor found himself stammering, thoroughly taken aback. “My dear, the *Carpathia* has not yet reached New York.”

“Nevertheless, you have heard something,” Moira said, with the same quiet positiveness. “News of some kind has reached you in some way; and it will be kinder, very much kinder, if you will tell me at once what it is.”

“My dear,” he said again, in a tone of acute distress, “if you would only consent to trust me——”

“I trust you fully,” she interrupted, “to do all that you can to spare me pain. But forgive me if I say that you are making a mistake in the way you are trying to do this at present. I cannot consent to remain here and let you go alone, unless you tell me your reason for the request, and what news from, of, or about Royall you have had.”

The Governor cast a look of despair at Mrs. Granger, who sat by, with an “I told you so” expression of countenance, which was far from encouraging. Nevertheless, he appealed to her:

“Emily, can’t you try to persuade her?”

“No, my dear Governor,” Mrs. Granger answered, “I can’t try anything so useless; for I am sure Moira could not be persuaded to be satisfied with anything less than the whole truth. But I’ll tell her that, if you like. It’s simply this,” she added, turning to Moira: “Governor Harcourt has had a wireless dispatch from Paul Lyndon, on board the *Carpathia*, asking him to come to New York to meet

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them on their arrival, but on no account to allow you to come."

"On no account to allow me to come!" Moira echoed the words as one who finds it difficult to take in the meaning of what she hears. She stood for a moment motionless, her hand on her heart, as if in the effort to still its beating, her wide eyes fixed on the speaker. Then she turned to Governor Harcourt and held out her hand.

"If you have no objection," she said, "I should like to see that message."

He drew it from his pocket and handed it to her without a word. She read it in silence, and in silence also quietly folded and returned it to him.

"It is very emphatic," she said then, "and also very mysterious. It is hard to imagine any reason for such a prohibition; but necessarily there must be a reason. I am quite certain that Paul Lyndon would not have sent it otherwise."

Governor Harcourt and Mrs. Granger exchanged glances. Here was, indeed, the reasonableness of which the latter had spoken; and which the former felt, with a sense of great relief, simplified matters so amazingly for him.

"In that case," he said eagerly, "since you are convinced that there must be a good reason behind the prohibition of your going to New York, you will be satisfied to remain here and let me go alone?"

She looked at him and smiled faintly,—a smile full of a very poignancy of pain.

"I could hardly be satisfied to do that," she replied in her low, thrilling voice. "It would be asking almost too much of me. I'm afraid I haven't

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patience enough to wait as much longer as I should have to wait, if I remained here, to learn the meaning of—*that*,” and she pointed to the message in his hand. “But there’s a possible compromise,” she went on before he could answer. “I will go to New York with you, as we have arranged—no, please don’t say anything until I finish!—but I will not go with you to the ship to meet Royall, as we planned. That must be given up. I have dreamed of it a great deal. It seemed as if it would be very beautiful for him to see us both together, as his first sight on reaching home. But, in the face of this message, we can take no risk. I am as firmly convinced of that as you can be. Therefore, you shall go alone to the ship to meet him; but I will be somewhere very near, so that there need be no time lost in bringing him to me. Is there any objection to that plan?”

The wistful appeal of the tone, the wistful beauty of the eyes fastened on him, brought something into Governor Harcourt’s throat that made speech difficult for a moment; and when he spoke his voice was more than a little husky.

“There can’t be the slightest objection to such a plan,” he declared; “and, if I had only thought of it, there wouldn’t have been any need to trouble you with the knowledge of this” (he shook the offending message) “until we reached New York. But as it is——”

“As it is, it is better that I should know it now,” Moira told him quietly. “For it’s clear to me that there is something approaching for which I shall need to prepare myself, to call up all the powers of fortitude of my soul. I am utterly at a loss even to

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imagine what this can be; but I have felt it all along,—felt it in Royall's strange silence ever since he went to Tripoli. And this message only makes the knowledge clearer, the necessity for preparation greater."

"I can't see myself," the Governor growled, "that this message makes anything clearer, unless it is Paul's stupidity. How any sensible man could send a message so damnably enigmatic and obscure passes my comprehension. I confess that I have never been so provoked with Paul in my life."

Moirá leaned forward and laid her hand on his arm.

"Don't be provoked with Paul," she said. "I have an idea that he is doing his best in a difficult situation. We don't know what this situation is. But let us trust him; for I believe that in that message he meant to spare both you and me."

"Spare us—what?" the Governor asked, staring at her in wonder.

"Ah," she answered, with something like a cry of anguish, "God alone knows that! But we shall know very soon now, so let us pray for strength to meet the knowledge."

CHAPTER XXIV

IT WAS with a heart beating in those sick throbs of anxiety and suspense which are felt to the very tips of the fingers that Moira stood at the window of a private sitting-room in a well-known New York hotel, and looked out with an almost unseeing gaze on the throng of humanity pouring in ceaseless tide along the street below, while waiting for Governor Harcourt's return from the pier, where he had gone to meet the incoming *Carpathia*.

It seemed incredible even yet that she had allowed him to go alone,—that she had been able to remain behind when he went to meet Royall. Whence the strength enabling her to do this had come she hardly knew; yet there was no doubt that it had come with the knowledge that it was impossible to disregard the strange warning, amounting to a command, which Paul Lyndon had sent in advance of their arrival.

She was now repeating to herself the words of that message, as she stood, looking out with absent gaze on the hurrying crowd of the street: "*On no account let Moira come.*" What could it mean? she asked again, as she had asked so many times since the message was received. What had happened to Royall? And, whatever had happened to him, why should *she* be debarred from meeting him, when his father was allowed to do so? It was incomprehensible; but the explanation was at hand,—must be at hand very soon now. And then suddenly her heart gave a great,

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sickening leap, as the telephone bell in the room rang sharply. She turned and walked over to the instrument, but it was a moment before she could steady her hand and her voice enough to take up the receiver and answer.

The message from the office was to the effect that Mr. Lyndon wished to know if she could receive him.

"Yes, yes!" she answered. "Send him up at once!" And, dropping the receiver, she stood, with hands tightly clasped together, waiting for the sound of the knock at the door which she knew would come in a moment. And in hardly more time it came. She heard her own voice say, "Enter!" as if it were the voice of another; and the next minute Paul Lyndon stood before her.

Little as she was thinking about him, it flashed across her mind, as her glance fell on him, that, had they met accidentally, she would hardly have known him, so much was he changed. Thin, worn, darkly sunburned, with the marks of mental suffering and the traces of physical fatigue written deeply on his face, he was hardly more than a shadow of the man who had stood before her last. In the eyes which met her own, however, there was no change, save that the fire of indignation which had then burned in them was now replaced by a look of compassion so intense that it filled her with a sense of foreboding—or, rather, with a certainty of coming ill—before he uttered a word. Indeed, she gave him no time to speak; but, holding out her hand as he advanced, she said calmly, but with a thrill in her voice which he never forgot:

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"What is the matter with Royall? For God's sake, tell me at once!"

"Royall is quite well," he answered hastily. "The voyage seems to have re-established his health in a wonderful degree——"

"Then why is he not with you?" she interrupted. "Don't prolong this agony of suspense. Tell me—in a word."

"That is what I cannot do," he said firmly, but with the same compassion in his tone that was in his eyes. "I can't tell you in a word; but I will tell you in as few words as possible, if you, who have controlled yourself so wonderfully up to this time, will control yourself a little longer, and let me go into a few details."

"No, no!" she cried. "You must not ask it of me. I have borne as much as I *can* bear. Don't you see that you are torturing me? Tell me! You say that Royall is well: then, why is he not here? Why has he not come to me?"

He took the hands which she held out to him so imploringly in his own, as if by the close warmth of touch, as well as by eyes and voice, to express the passion of sympathy and pity which possessed him. It was hard to put what he had to say in the terse form she demanded; but he saw that it was necessary to do so. Her powers of self-control had reached their limit, and to withhold the truth an instant longer was, indeed, simply to torture her. So he answered her last question briefly and distinctly:

"Royall has not come to you," he told her, "because he has forgotten that you exist."

She staggered backward, and would have fallen

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had he not held her hands. Then, as he placed her gently in a chair which stood behind her, she looked at him with eyes of piteous appeal.

"Tell me exactly what you mean," she said. "How can Royall have forgotten that I exist?"

"Because he has received some injury in the head which has affected the brain," he answered. "That was what I wanted to tell you first. That was why I sent the message warning you not to meet him, because I feared the consequences of a sudden shock both to him and to you. It is possible that when he sees you he may remember you. But a steamship pier was not the place for such an experiment."

"Do you mean," she asked, with dry lips, "that he has forgotten *everything*? Has he no recollection of our marriage?"

"He has not the least recollection of it. Nothing that I can say—and I have said everything I possibly could—can rouse recollection in his mind. Your name—forgive me that I must pain you by telling you this—is without association of any kind to him. He simply shakes his head and looks puzzled when I mention it."

"O my God, my God, have pity on me!" she cried, clasping her hands over her eyes. "I have thought, or tried to think, of everything that could happen to him, but I have never thought of this,—of being wiped out of his mind! I have never imagined such a misfortune as an injury to his brain."

"It is only a partial injury," Lyndon assured her, "and may be temporary. Every doctor whom I have had an opportunity to consult tells me that such cases

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are not unknown,—are, indeed, fairly common. Sometimes there is a complete loss of the knowledge of identity, and many mysterious disappearances may be accounted for in this way." He hesitated a moment. "If I had not gone to Tripoli," he continued then, "and if your little—er—amulet——"

"*Agnus Dei*," she corrected him.

"I beg your pardon!—if your *Agnus Dei* had not been brought to the Franciscan Father who showed it to me, Royall might have disappeared, as other men have disappeared; for he had forgotten his name; he could not tell who he was, or where he came from; and it was not until he saw me that any knowledge of his own identity returned to him."

"But it *did* return to him when he saw you!" she cried, springing forward in her eagerness. "And so, no doubt, when he sees me, he will remember all that he has forgotten about our life and love. Oh, I am sure that is what will take place! Where is he? Why can I not see him without delay?"

"You cannot see him," Lyndon told her gently, "because he has gone with his father to consult a famous brain specialist. We thought it best to take no chances, but to have the best advice obtainable before subjecting him to the possibly dangerous shock of meeting you. And you have been so brave all along that I am sure you will be brave enough now to bear delay a little longer."

She sank back in her chair.

"If I must!" she breathed through her lips like a sigh. "But it is hard that it should be his father and not I who can accompany him."

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A sudden flush mounted to Lyndon's thin, sun-burned face.

"It must seem hard," he assented; "for no doubt you are thinking that this is all, in great degree, his father's fault——"

"No—oh, no!" she broke in quickly. "Nothing could be further from my mind than such a thought. I am glad, very glad, that he is with his father, and that their reconciliation is complete. But" (wistfully), "I would wish to be included in it,—that is all."

He looked at her with a passion of pity in his deep-set eyes.

"You *will* be included in it," he said. "There can't be a doubt of that—when Royall meets you again."

Life, light, color came into her face, transforming it under his gaze, filling it with the radiance of hope and expectation.

"Do you think so?" she queried. "Do you believe that he will recognize me as he recognized you when you went to him out in the desert? Ah, that will be a happiness worth waiting for! So I will try to wait patiently. And while I wait, will you tell me all the details of how you found him?"

"Then," he said, "I must tell you first that, as I should never have found him but for your *Agnus Dei*, so I could never have reached him except through the kindness and help of the Franciscan Father of whom I have written. He stood security for me with the Arabs that I was not an Italian nor connected in any way with the Italian forces. It seems that

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Royall went out from Tripoli to one of the nearby oases, and in some manner that we can only guess at—for he remembers nothing—took part in the fighting there. When the Arabs retreated, they carried him, unconscious and rather badly wounded, with them——”

“Wounded!” Moira cried sharply. “You have not told me that before.”

“There was no need to do so. The wound has healed. That wonderful air of the desert is almost an antiseptic in itself, while the Arabs have in a primitive way much surgical skill. They cared for Royall because they insist that he was fighting with *them* and not with the Italians. M. Lemontier told me that he thought this probable, because Royall’s sympathies had been intensely excited for the Arabs in the contests that had arisen—the Italians made the great mistake of retaliating savagely for natural uprisings, you know,—but he believes that the injury to his head occurred before he left Tripoli, and accounts for the impulse which carried him out into the desert. Why he was not killed by one side or the other in the fighting which ensued is a mystery we shall probably never fathom—unless” (he smiled a little) “your *Agnus Dei* had something to do with it.”

“I have no doubt,” she said simply, “that it had much to do with it.”

“Well, they carried him away with them, as I have said, to one of the farther oases, whence he might easily have disappeared into the depths of Africa, into those regions where Islam still holds undisputed sway, but for——”

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"The goodness of God," she murmured, as he paused for an instant.

"I was about to say again, 'but for your *Agnus Dei*,'" he went on; "but possibly you are right in thinking that it was the goodness of God which brought that little emblem to the notice of an Arab, who recognized it for what it was, and carried it to the Fathers in Tripoli. For when Royall recovered consciousness, he had, as I've said, forgotten all of his past life,—his name, his nationality, everything. So you see how little hope there was of our ever finding him. But when at least I reached him, when he saw me, things came back to him: he remembered who he was, and all the events of his life up to——"

"Yes?" she said, as he hesitated and paused again. "Up to——?"

"The time when you entered it," he continued, with an effort. "There his memory stops short. He remembers Paris and his life there as an artist, but he has no recollection whatever of his marriage or—of you."

His voice fell over the last words with a cadence which seemed almost that of despair. But there was no despair in the face which looked at him with eyes full of the glow of hope.

"He will remember when he sees me," she said. "Oh, I am sure, very sure of that! How could he fail to remember *me*, when he knew *you* as soon as he saw you? Only tell me how long it will be before I can see him."

"I will go and find out," he answered, rising. Then he hesitated, and stood for a moment gazing

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at her, as if he felt an imperative necessity to say something which was difficult to utter. Finally it came. "Don't be too certain of his remembering you as soon as he sees you," he begged earnestly. "Remembrance may come after a while, but I doubt its being awakened at once. You see, I have tried so hard to rouse it that I—I'm afraid. So, don't hope too much."

The intense urgency of his tone, the thought for her which it implied, filled her shining eyes with a soft mist of tears.

"You are very good," she told him. "I will try not to hope too much. Now go and bring him to me."

What length of time elapsed after Lyndon left the room until that for which she waited came to her Moira never knew. Time seemed to have no meaning for her, as she lay back motionless in her chair, wrapped in a repose of mind and body which seemed almost blissful after the racking suspense she had undergone. Indeed, it *was* bliss to be assured that Royall was well, that nothing which was really serious held them apart, that they would meet so soon, and that she would have the happiness of bringing back to his mind all that it had lost. For, of course, it was absurd to suppose that he, who had known Paul Lyndon at once, would not know her as soon as his eyes fell upon her. She almost laughed to think of Lyndon's doubt on that score. But even if the doubt were so far justified that a little time was required to wake recollection in his mind, what an easy, an almost enchanting task that would be!

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For it would be like living the romance of their lives over again; since he, who had once fallen so passionately in love with her, could not fail to fall in love with her over again, even if—dreadful thought!—she must at first seem to him not his own adored Moira, but a stranger.

And so, with body relaxed, and mind wrapped in these happy dreams, forgetting altogether her promise not to hope too much, she was still lying motionless in her seat when a low knock at the door suddenly brought her to her feet, with every nerve strung like a taut wire. In answer to her permission to enter, the door opened and Lyndon again appeared, with an expression of quick regret as he saw the disappointment legible in her face.

"I have only come for a moment, in advance of Royall," he said hastily, "to tell you that the brain specialist has given a very encouraging opinion. He thinks it probable that the recovery of his memory is only a question of time. But he can give no idea of the probable length of time; and he says that we must not be surprised if—if it is longer than we would wish. It will do no harm for you to meet him and try to awaken his recollection. But he warns you not to be surprised if you fail at first——"

"Did he say anything else,—give any other warning?" she interrupted eagerly.

"None. You are at liberty to try any means that may occur to you to rouse the dormant memory, and—and here he is!"

He turned, as there came a step which paused at the half-open door, and opening it wider, he drew within the tall figure which stood on the threshold;

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then he went hastily out of the room, closing the door behind him.

But he was not able to close it before he heard Moira's low cry of "Royall!" And it seemed to him that the poignancy of that cry, the passion of love and appeal which filled it, might have roused memory in any man on whom death had not laid his seal. So he moved away, hoping, despite his own judgment, that the recognition she expected had been awakened; and it was well, perhaps, that he could not look through the closed door from which he turned.

For he would have beheld a very piteous sight, indeed—the dying out of hope in Moira's face and eyes as she saw that not even her cry of welcome nor her outstretched arms brought a single ray of recognition into the face of the man who, hesitating painfully, and frowning slightly, with an evident effort to remember, stood regarding her with the gaze of a stranger. It was Royall—her own Royall,—as far as outward semblance went; but she had a feeling as if his body stood before her without its soul, so strange was it that Royall, who only a few short months before had wooed and won her with such ardent devotion, should now regard her not only unknowingly, but even as if he were afraid of her.

It was that look—of one who fears a claim that he cannot meet—which told her that she must proceed cautiously, that she must forget herself and for the present think only of him. His obvious distress and perplexity touched the mother element, the longing to heal and protect, which is in every woman's love; and after a short pause, and a sharp struggle

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within herself, she found strength to say in a different tone, and very quietly:

"Royall, is it, indeed, true that you do not remember me?"

"I am sorry to say that it is true," he answered courteously and with evident reluctance. "It seems quite—inexcusable that I should not remember any one like yourself; but—I have had an accident, you know—so perhaps you will forgive me——"

"Forgive you! Oh, my love,—my poor, dear love!" she broke into his hesitating speech before she could restrain herself. "My whole heart is filled with tenderness and pity for you. And you *will* remember me—oh, I am sure you will remember in a little while that I was, that I am forever, your own Moira!"

"Perhaps so," he said, with the same courtesy, but a deepening uneasiness, which warned her again that she must not be betrayed into any more passionate outbreaks. "If I have, indeed, seen you before——"

"*If!*" she repeated sharply; but then, with a supreme effort of self-control, stopped and went on more gently: "There is no 'if' about it, dear Royall! A hundred witnesses could be brought to prove to you that you have not only seen me before, but that you loved and married me. Oh, don't be afraid that I shall make any claim of that!" she cried quickly, as she caught the expression in his narrowing eyes. "Don't—for God's sake, don't be afraid of me! I promise you that I will never ask anything that you are not willing and ready to give. Set your mind at rest on that point. I will not force my-

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self upon you in any way, not even my companionship, if you would rather be without it."

She wondered if she would ever know a sharper pang than that which was like a knife-thrust to her heart, when she saw the expression of relief which came into his face at those words. And yet there was comfort, too, in feeling that she was able, by the assurance of effacing herself, to make his burden lighter, and help him even in so strange and hard a way.

"I promise you that," she repeated—and those who in past days had raved over the golden beauty of her voice, over its wonderful modulations and depth of expression, would have gained new knowledge of its possibilities, had they heard the thrilling tones, soft as those of a mother reassuring a frightened child, in which she spoke. "And now, since you are assured that I will press no claim upon you," she went on, "will you not sit down, and let me once—just once—remind you of all that you have for the present forgotten? It may possibly help you to remember—something."

"It may," he agreed.

But the quick ear of love told her that he uttered the words without hope, and even without desire for the experiment she wished to make. She felt instinctively that his mind shrank from the effort to remember which would be required of it; but she nerved herself to the needed attempt, for his sake more than for her own. Yet, fearing to approach closer to him, lest her self-control should give way, and she should be weak enough to throw herself, weeping, into arms which had not opened to receive her, she only

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pointed to a chair, in which he sat down with an air of uneasiness and reluctance which again stabbed her heart.

She sank into her own chair—that in which she had been dreaming such blissful dreams a little while before,—and for a minute silence reigned in the room where the two who had been so close to each other, and whom events had so cruelly divided, sat together, yet farther apart than when continents and oceans had lain between them. Then, after lifting her soul for an instant in a prayer for wisdom and courage, Moira began to speak. Involuntarily, as her thoughts went back to their first meeting in Paris, she spoke in French, and she was glad to see that Royall showed no sign of having lost any of his familiarity with the language. It was easier to express in her own tongue all that was in her mind and heart; and so the stream of musical words flowed on, full of the exquisite phrases and lovely sounds in which all Latin tongues abound, and freighted with a tenderness which was implied rather than expressed.

For it was the story of their love that she was telling him,—of how he had first seen and fallen in love with her as “*La Princesse Lointaine*”; and how, won by his passionate devotion, she had stepped down from her throne, turned her back on her many worshippers, and gone into quiet obscurity to share his life. She described their happy days together in the little rose-embowered villa beside the Seine; the evenings when they floated on the lovely river, with sunset glories painting the West, and the moon shining on them from the soft sky above. In describing

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these scenes, and others more tenderly intimate still, more than once her voice faltered, and "O Royall, do you not remember *that?*?" she would pause to cry. But when she met his eyes, full of painful wonder, and saw him shake his head, she pulled herself together again, and with a great effort went on. She told him of the arrival of his father's letter, of his meeting with M. Lemontier, and his resolution to go to Morocco, and then at last he broke in:

"Yes," he said, "I know that I have been in Morocco; for I have seen my own sketches. And—and Paul has told me almost exactly the same story that you have just been telling me of my marriage in Paris. You tell it much more beautifully than he did, but——"

"Am I not any more able to make you remember it?" she asked, with inexpressible yearning in her voice.

He looked at her again with the same air of apology which he had showed before, and which more than anything else marked his sense of strangeness toward her.

"I am sorry to say," he answered, "that, charmingly as you have told it, I have not the least recollection of a single one of the events you have described."

Then, forgetting everything except her wild desire to touch the chord which might awaken memory, she rose and flung herself on her knees beside his chair.

"Royall," she cried, in a very passion of pleading, "whatever else you may forget, don't you remember *me*—Moirà Deschanel—your Far-Away Princess,



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your wife? Have you no glimmer of recollection that you once loved me?"

But even as she uttered the passionate appeal it seemed to her that her heart broke, for he shrank visibly away from her.

"Forgive me," he said again, "but I—I remember nothing."

CHAPTER XXV

UNDER the blow of Royall's complete forgetfulness, not only of herself, but of all the facts of their marriage, even Moira's courage sank, utterly crushed. But not for long. The brave heart soon rose up to sustain the spirit, and hope revived as she recalled what Lyndon had reported of the specialist's opinion, and as she realized that she had in great measure prepared disappointment for herself by expecting too much too soon. She had been unable to believe that recollection would not be awakened in Royall's mind by the first sight of her face, the first tone of her voice; and the shock of finding this not so had proved for a time overwhelming. But she had already rallied some measure of strength and courage when Governor Harcourt came to her; and his distress was so great that she was forced to put aside and almost forget her own in the effort to comfort and encourage him.

"It cannot be other than a temporary condition," she repeated again and again; "especially since it seems that his loss of memory is only partial. He remembers his past life up to a certain point; he knew his cousin as soon as he saw him; and—there was no hesitation in his recognition of you, was there?"

"None at all," the Governor answered. "He knew me immediately, as clearly as he has ever known me in his life. But that he should fail to recognize *you*, that he has lost all memory of his marriage—that is simply terrible!"

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"Yes, it is terrible," she acknowledged; "or would be if we had not every reason to hope for the recovery of his memory very soon."

"God grant it!" the Governor said fervently. "And I want to tell you that I am even more anxious for that recovery on your account than on his own. For it is too much that you should have to suffer this after all that you have already suffered for him, and that I should be unable to make the full reparation I had hoped to make for my unhappy refusal to recognize his marriage."

"Don't think of that!" she cried quickly. "You have made the fullest reparation, if reparation were needed, during these weeks when we have been suffering the same anxiety, and when you have let me come so close to you——"

"Let you! Good heavens! Why, you've sustained and held me up! You've been the greatest comfort I have had."

"And don't you know what a comfort it has been to me to feel that I could help you?" she asked gently. "So don't trouble about me; don't think any more about reparation. Let us only think of Royall—of what can be done to help *him*."

"That is the hardest thing of all,—that there's nothing to be done," the Governor replied, in a tone of deep depression. "The doctor whom we've just consulted says that there's absolutely nothing that we can do, except keep him quiet, and, as far as possible, surround him with cheerful influences, and that after a time memory may awaken; but he can give us no idea of how long that time may be."

"It does not sound very encouraging—for me,"

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Moira sighed. "For he not only fails to recognize me—he is afraid of me!"

"Afraid of you! Impossible!"

"Oh, very possible, as you will see if you think for a moment. Put yourself in his place, and you will feel how dreadful it must be to have a strange woman—one whom he has no recollection of ever having seen before—claiming to be married to him. It was no wonder he shrank from me—my poor Royall!—not knowing what demands upon his life I might make." Her eyes suddenly brimmed with tears, which she could not restrain. "There could be no greater proof than such a fear of how entirely he has forgotten me," she said.

"My poor child!" The Governor put out his hand and touched hers softly. "I can't tell you how this grieves me. I can give you no idea how distressed I am for you. But take heart. In a little while he will fall in love with you over again, and *that* will rouse his memory in short order."

The eyes which were shining through their tears like sapphires under crystal looked at him wistfully.

"Do you think that is—likely?" she asked.

"No, I don't think it likely, but certain," he answered stoutly. "How can you possibly expect anything else? Don't you know that you are—er—extremely attractive,—in fact, positively fascinating?"

"Sometimes in the past I have been made to feel that some people found me so," she replied simply. "Royall was one of them, but he has forgotten—absolutely forgotten—that he ever felt anything of the kind."

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"He will remember, he can't fail to remember, when he is again closely associated with you——"

"But that cannot be," she interrupted. "I have promised that I will make no claim upon him."

"It is not necessary for you to make any claim, only to come and live under the same roof with him, and give him a chance to remember you. With association, memory will revive. It can't be otherwise."

"But might not my presence—association with me—be likely to annoy, and therefore injure, rather than help him?"

"My dear, you are talking nonsense! Association with you could never possibly annoy or injure any one; and I'm positive that it would be the best influence for good that could be brought to bear on Royall."

"Ah, if I thought that," she cried, "I would be willing to endure anything, even to meet again the look of fear that was in his eyes a little while ago!"

"You shouldn't think hardly of any such look," the Governor urged. "Remember that the poor fellow isn't really himself——"

"Think hardly of it!" she broke in. "Oh, don't you see, don't you know that my heart is breaking with pity for him,—pity so great that it leaves no room for pity of myself?"

"Yes, yes," he answered hurriedly. "I see clearly enough that you are breaking your heart over his forgetfulness; but that is what you must not do, either for him or for yourself. You must consider him simply as a man who is ill, and you must come and help to bring him back to health."

"What do you want me to do?" she asked docilely.

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"I want you to go with us down to the Manor, where Royall can be quiet, and where he will be in the midst of associations that will aid his recovery. I know that you shrink from seeming to force yourself in any way upon him, but I don't ask you to do that: only to be where he can see you constantly; for, in my opinion, association with you can't fail to re-awaken memory. If you will do this——"

"I will do anything in which there is the least hope of helping him!" she cried passionately. "That is my duty, as well as my ardent desire. And I shall be glad to go with you down to the Manor, if I can be assured that my presence there will not trouble or injure him."

"We must take the risk of what I consider so improbable."

"No," she said quickly, "we can take no risk. In the first place, we must have the opinion of the doctor whom you've just consulted,—you will be kind enough to go with me to see him, will you not? And, in the second place, you must ask Royall if he will object to my presence in the house. If he does object, I beg you not to urge him to consent. Anything that troubled or annoyed would certainly do him harm rather than good. And—and I couldn't bear to feel that I was making his home unpleasant to him."

"You are beyond all doubt the most self-forgetful creature I have ever known," the Governor told her. "I can't think that there's any reason for such precaution; but we'll consult the doctor, if you wish it."

"Oh, I do wish it! I couldn't be satisfied other-

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wise. Can we go at once to see him? There's the telephone, if you will ask."

To the Governor's telephoned inquiry a reply was returned that the doctor, although his office hours were just closing, would make an exception in their favor and would see them, if they were able to come immediately. A taxicab was, therefore, ordered, and they were promptly whirled away to meet the appointment.

They felt themselves fortunate in the fact that the usually thronged reception-room was now empty, and that the great doctor, coming in quietly, sat down to talk to them with an air of friendly interest. This was particularly marked as his eyes rested on Moira; for the exquisite distinction of her personality, its grace and charm, and the foreign note which was like a perfume brought from an older and finer civilization,—all appealed strongly to the man of keen sensibilities and cosmopolitan culture. His sympathies had already been roused by the young man who had come to him with a lost memory, out of the mysterious desert beyond Tripoli; and now this sight of the wife he had forgotten enlisted a yet keener interest in the story and the situation. As he looked at her, and as he listened to the music of her soft, pathetic voice, he found himself wondering how any blow could be violent enough to make a man forget her. And Moira spoke to him the more readily because there was no mistaking the compassion in his eyes. After she had described her interview with Royall, and the vain efforts she had made to waken in his mind any recollection of herself or of their life together, she told of Governor Harcourt's desire that she should

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accompany them to their home in Maryland, and then put her question:

"What must I do—or, rather, what is best for *him* that I should do?" she asked. "Please understand that I do not want to consider myself, or to be considered, at all. I want only to do the thing which will have the best chance of helping Royall. If there is any danger of my presence injuring him, I am willing to efface myself utterly,—to let him forget, for the present at least, that I exist——"

"I do not think," the doctor interposed here, "that there is the least necessity for anything of the kind, nor that there is the slightest danger of your presence injuring him. On the contrary, I believe that it may prove beneficial."

"Ah!" (A note of satisfaction this, from the Governor.) "Didn't I tell you so?"

"Then you advise" (Moirá looked at the physician with eyes at once the most appealing and the most beautiful he had ever seen) "that I should go to Harcourt Manor, even though I see distinctly that he shrinks from association with me?"

"That will probably not last long," the doctor told her kindly. "He shrinks only because the injured mind instinctively fears that an effort may be required of it which it cannot make. When he finds that you do not require any such effort (and I am sure you will be careful not to do so), he will cease to shrink, he will yield to the influence of your presence, and after a little while all will be well."

"You mean" (eagerly) "that he will remember all he has forgotten?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell you!" the doctor answered.

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"How much he may remember, or how soon, no one can say. The injury which he received—it seems to have been a blow upon the head from a heavy, old-fashioned sword—has caused a pressure upon the brain at a particular spot, and we must await the process of nature for the relief of this. Memory may return gradually, or it may come by some sudden shock or blow; or, yet again, it may never return. You must be prepared for any of these things."

"But if it never returns, he will never remember *me!*" Moira cried, in a tone of anguish.

Compassion deepened in the clear, keen eyes regarding her.

"The chances are that it will return, sooner or later," the doctor told her. "But even if it does not, I think that after a short time he will be more than willing to let your memory take the place of his, and believe whatever you tell him of his position toward you. All that is needed to deal with the situation is patience, and" (he hesitated an instant) "the old-fashioned thing called love."

So it came to pass that, being assured that Royall did not object to her presence, Moira went down to Harcourt Manor with his father and himself, and took her strange, anomalous place there; acknowledged by the family as the wife of the son of the house, who had forgotten her.

It was a situation to meet which required all her strength of soul, all the self-forgetfulness which was so marked a trait of her character. But, as she had told both Governor Harcourt and the doctor, she did not consider herself at all: her only thought was

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to help Royall on the road to recovery; her only desire to be near him, and to care for him as far as was possible. She had soon to learn, however, that this was not very far. To her acute, love-sharpened perception it became increasingly clear that he shrank from her as he had shrunk at their first meeting; that he preferred service from any one else rather than from her, and the society of any one else to hers.

And to bear this was not rendered easier by two elements of the situation. One was the disapproving coldness of Mrs. Lyndon, who made no secret of her belief that Royall would stand a better chance for recovery without the presence of a wife whom he did not recognize; and the other was the fact that Elinor Fane was a frequent guest at the Manor, that Royall had remembered her at once, as he remembered every one connected with his earlier life, and that he sought her society in a manner which indicated that his old fancy for her had revived under the influence of the old environment.

It was some time before Moira grasped the full meaning of this. She could not fail to see that, despite his unvarying courtesy—courtesy paid as to a stranger,—he avoided her carefully, was uneasy in her presence, and was never left alone with her if he could avoid it. But, absorbed in the pain of this, she did not at first realize how eagerly he turned toward the girl who had met him with an outburst of affection and sympathy, and who was associated with all the gayest and most delightful memories of his early youth. In *her* society there was no painful effort required to remember things which eluded recollection, and which by eluding excited a vague

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sense of resentment. On the contrary, all that she recalled was like a flood of sunshine to his depressed mind, bringing back that intense pleasure in life which had always been so strong in him, and for which he now instinctively longed; while it was, in a certain sense, inevitable that together with these recollections there should have been a revival of the attraction which he had at that time felt for her.

At first every one was glad to note the effect she had upon him; and Governor Harcourt begged her to come and pay a long visit at the Manor, "to cheer Royall up." To him there was nothing more natural than that she should be able to exercise this cheering influence.

"You see, they grew up together," he explained to Moira. "They have so many associations in common—associations with days when they had nothing to do but enjoy themselves—that it is not strange Royall should find it pleasant to be with her."

"No, it isn't strange at all," Moira agreed, trying valiantly to smile. "She recalls things that he likes to remember—that he *can* remember. One should be very glad of that. It is a pleasure to hear them laughing together, for he laughs only when he is with her."

The unconscious sadness of the last words made the Governor glance at her with quick sympathy.

"He will laugh with you, too, after a little while," he assured her consolingly. "You mustn't let yourself doubt that."

"It is hard not to doubt it," she replied, in a low tone; "for you must see that he turns from me more

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and more. It is quite clear that I—I do not attract him in the least.”

“Not just now, perhaps,” the Governor was forced to admit; “but that’s because he has gone back, as it were, to his boyhood, and he—er—likes what is associated with that time of his life. As I’ve remarked, Elinor Fane and he have so much in common.”

“While he has altogether forgotten all that he had in common with me!” Moira said, turning away to hide her pain.

But a little later even the Governor grew uneasy at Royall’s absorption in the girl, who, on her part, put everything else aside to devote her time and attention to him. How much of this sprang from the impulse to cheer and help him, and how much was of deliberate intention to fan into new life the old flame of fancy for herself, it would be difficult to say; one may charitably suppose that it began with the first, and went on to the second, as she saw how easy such revival of feeling became. At all events, when Paul Lyndon unexpectedly appeared at the Manor, matters had reached a point that immediately excited his concern and indignation. His first step was to remonstrate with Royall, who listened to him with an averted eye and a frowning brow, and then unhesitatingly intimated that he was taking a liberty which the situation did not justify.

“Whatever partial injury my mind has suffered,” he said, “I am quite capable of directing my own conduct without the help of suggestions from you, my dear Paul!”

“You must forgive me,” Paul persisted, “if I don’t

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think that you altogether realize your true position, or else you would not devote so much time and attention to Elinor Fane."

Royall looked at him now with a spark of unmistakable anger in his glance.

"When you speak of my true position," he said, "I presume that you mean with regard to the lady who—er—claims to be my wife."

"*Claims* to be!" Lyndon's indignation made him for a moment forget himself. "You must know that she is your wife!"

"I beg your pardon!" Royall retorted. "I know nothing of the kind. I am told that I married her in Paris, and it is possible that I really did so. That, of course, is a matter susceptible of proof."

"Would you like me to get the proofs for you?"

"It is not necessary. I am willing to take for granted that they exist; but I am distinctly not willing to be bound by an act of which I have no recollection, and which, if I did remember, I should probably desire to repudiate."

At those words, with their deliberate intonation, Lyndon felt his heart grow cold. He looked at his cousin with a sense of something like despair, for there seemed to him more in this than the lapse of memory: it struck him that there was a recurring note of one of Royall's ruling characteristics—a fickleness which had made him in the past turn lightly from one fancy to another, and find the latest attraction always the most irresistible. So he had forgotten Elinor Fane and all the other charmers round whom he had fluttered, when the lovely French actress, in the glamour of her artistic success, had dawned upon his vision,

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and given him the delightful triumph of bearing her away from the enthusiastic admiration of the public. How like Royall it was to have been fascinated with her then! And how like Royall also to turn now from the beautiful, wistful presence which, no longer surrounded by any glamour, appealed to him less than the pretty, alluring girl who, besides amusing him in the present, recalled all the gay memories of his youth! With a flash of intuition the whole situation was, or seemed to be, made clear to Lyndon. The blow in the African desert was accountable for the loss of memory; but it had not created the temperament which made the change of feeling possible, and so significant that the sense of despair already alluded to came over Lyndon as he thought of Moira.

Presently he went in search of her, anxious to learn how far she had perceived or apprehended the meaning of the return of Royall's fancy to the girl he had once played at being in love with. It was some time before he could find her; but a hint from some one finally sent him out into the garden, where, he was told, she liked to go.

It was the first time he had entered the garden since the unforgettable night when he had walked through it with her in the summer moonlight; and it was a very different scene which it presented now, in the late autumn of the year, from that which he remembered so vividly. The flowers were all gone, and places that had been gay with bloom were now bare and brown. But, nevertheless, there was a charm, a sense of beauty that was only sleeping, in the ordered spaces; while the soft yet subtly melan-

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choly sunshine of an Indian summer day rested over everything, and brought out the deep green of the great box hedges. Instinct told him where he was most likely to find Moira; and so, following the way they had taken on that past summer night, he finally came to the remote, cloistered space where the lilies had bloomed in such royal splendor.

They were gone now, leaving no sign of that past vision of beauty; and the mellow sunlight, pouring into the enclosure, showed only the sundial in the centre, and a tall, slender, black-clad figure standing beside it, with eyes fastened on the legend of the dial; while from one white hand, that hung down, there was a flash of jewels as the sunshine caught the amethyst beads of a rosary. As he came forward across the brown turf, Moira lifted her eyes, and, smiling a little, pointed to the inscription.

"*Tempus fugit!*" she said, in her soft tones. "Do you remember how I told you of finding comfort in that reminder last summer? I was thinking then that the flight of time would soon bring Royall back; and now—I find comfort in it of another kind."

"And that is—?" Lyndon asked, a little curiously.

"It is, first, in the hope that every day as it goes is bringing nearer the time when he will once more remember everything which he has forgotten; and, secondly——"

"Yes, secondly?"—for she had paused a minute.

"Well, secondly, I find comfort in the chief thought of which this saying is intended to remind us: that time is bearing us swiftly to the place where all disappointments and all pain will end."

"In other words" (he looked at her keenly), "you

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are beginning to fear disappointment of your first hope?"

She met his gaze, and in the depths of her eyes he read at once a great sadness and a great courage.

"I am beginning," she said, "not so much to fear as to realize that we may have to wait a longer time than we expected for its fulfilment—if it is fulfilled at all." She paused again for a moment, and then went on, very quietly: "You see, I was foolish enough to think, when I came here, that perhaps my presence, my influence, might prove powerful enough to rouse the dormant memory in Royall's mind; or, failing that (and this was the suggestion of the doctor in New York, as well as of his father), that he might again find me as attractive as—as he found me once before."

Her voice dropped over the last words, and Lyndon turned his gaze quickly away from her face. It was more than he could bear, to read all that was in her eyes now. But the courage he had already read there had not failed, and presently the soft tones went on:

"One must face the truth, whatever it may be; and the truth I now recognize is, that he does not find me attractive at all. Instead of attracting or pleasing him, I—I only annoy and disturb him. It has taken me some time to find this out, but I see it clearly at last. And I was helped to see it by something which, quite accidentally, I overheard him say to Miss Fane. She must have made some remark about me, for he answered impatiently: 'No, I don't admire her at all. She is too foreign in looks and ways.' So, you see" (a hint of tears came into the

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voice now), "I am a Far-Away Princess still, even to him."

"I see that he is mad, infatuated, beguiled!" Lyndon cried hoarsely.

She shook her head.

"Not mad," she said, "though perhaps infatuated and beguiled. It is this way, I think: he has, as it were, gone back to the time before he went abroad or—knew me; and only the things and people that pleased him then please him now. There can be no change from this condition, unless something occurs to touch the other chord. But I have almost given up hope of that, at least for the present."

"Then," said Lyndon, "what are you going to do? You cannot stay here, to suffer like this and be treated in such a manner."

As he met her eyes again, he saw a light of resolution shining in them.

"You are right," she answered. "I have decided that I must not stay here longer,—not because of any suffering of my own, but because I feel that I am doing harm to him. It cannot be good for him to be annoyed by a presence which seems to be tacitly pressing a claim which I promised him I would never press. So I am going away."

"Where?"

"Ah" (a little sadly), "I have not settled that yet! It doesn't seem to matter much. I suppose I shall go back to my own country, where I shall no longer feel myself a stranger, a foreigner, a Far-Away Princess."

"Wherever you go, you can never be anything but a Far-Away Princess," he told her passionately.

CHAPTER XXVI

IT WAS not altogether a coincidence that, following close upon her conversation with Paul Lyndon in the garden, Moira found an opportunity to leave Harcourt Manor without the painful explanation of her feelings and intentions which she had unconsciously dreaded. For Lyndon, on his return to the city, lost no time in going to see Mrs. Granger; and what he told that lady had the effect of sending her immediately down to Covertdale, whence she speedily appeared at the Manor, promptly took in the situation there, and as promptly insisted upon carrying Moira back to Baltimore with her.

"It is absolutely necessary," she told Governor Harcourt when he remonstrated. "I have never seen any one so changed as Moira is. She's hardly more than a shadow of her former self. What she is enduring here after the long anxiety she has already undergone, is proving too much—not perhaps for her courage, but certainly for her health. She *must* go away."

"For a time, perhaps, it may be well that she should," the Governor somewhat reluctantly agreed. "I know that her position here is—er—very trying; but I've been hoping constantly that Royall might regain his memory of her."

Mrs. Granger gave him a look which expressed pity and impatience in equal degree.

"With that object in view," she observed dryly,

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"it would have been well if you had seen to it that Elinor Fane went home—and stayed there."

But beyond this hint, she declined to express her opinion of the situation. Evidently it was too late for preventive measures now; and she had Lyndon's word for it that remonstrance was of no avail with those chiefly concerned.

She contented herself, therefore, with bearing Moira away; and she was not surprised that, when the latter was relieved from the intense strain under which she had been living, a complete collapse followed, and for several days she lay, with every nerve relaxed, in a state closely bordering on unconsciousness. There was no outburst of grief, of the anguish of intolerable pain and disappointment, but only the utter giving way of the forces of life under an ordeal which had taxed every faculty of body and spirit to the breaking point.

But this condition did not last very long. Once more the brave heart rose up to meet the situation which confronted it, and the forces of life flowed back again at the imperious bidding of the soul. Mrs. Granger was almost startled by the change which she found one day, when she went to the side of the bed where the relaxed figure had lain so long motionless, while the dark-fringed lids hardly lifted from the eyes, and the spirit seemed to have withdrawn to such remote recesses of being that it had proved difficult to draw it back even for the necessity of supporting life with food. So it had been for days. But to-day there was a change; to-day the eyes met hers with their accustomed clear, steadfast

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light, and the pale lips smiled in answer to her greeting.

"Yes, I am stronger," Moira said. "I seem to have come back from some mysterious place, where I have gathered strength for whatever is still before me to do or to endure. And there is much of both; for I must now decide what I am going to do with my life——"

"There is no need to decide about that," Mrs. Granger interrupted hastily. "I can't tell you how glad I shall be if you will consent to stay with me until—until things adjust themselves."

"My dear friend" (Moira looked at her with eyes filled with grateful tears), "how good you are! But surely you must see that it might mean staying with you altogether; for, alas! we have no certainty when, if ever, things will adjust themselves in the sense you mean."

"You must not give up hope," Mrs. Granger remonstrated. "And you cannot forsake Royall."

"Forsake him!" It was a cry of deep and bitter pain. "Do you think I would ever forsake him, if I could help him in even the least degree, at any cost to myself? Do you imagine that I would consider my own suffering if by that suffering I could gain the smallest benefit for him? But, so far from helping, I only annoy and injure him by intruding my presence upon him,—a presence which he is growing to dislike."

"Moira, that is only your fancy."

"Not my fancy at all, dear friend, but what is inevitable under the circumstances; for I—I do not please him any longer; he has not the faintest recol-

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lection of me; and yet he is told that he is bound to me by an indissoluble tie. He does not want to dislike me, my poor Royall! But it will be impossible for him to avoid doing so, if myself and my claim continue to be thrust upon him. And so I must go away,—I must go as far as possible out of his life.”

“Moir, you amaze me! I should have thought that you would feel it your duty to stay with him.”

“It would be my duty,” Moira explained, in a tone which pleaded for understanding, “if he needed me, if I could render him any service, or if I were not harming him. But he does not need me, he does not want me; I can do nothing for him, and I am harming him by keeping up a constant irritation in his mind. He has tried not to betray this; but I know him so well that I am as keenly aware of it as he is, and it must be ended.”

Mrs. Granger looked at her curiously.

“And how do you intend to end it?” she asked.

“I intend to write to Governor Harcourt to-day,” Moira answered, “and tell him that I am going back to France. What I shall do after I reach there I am not quite certain; but I think I shall return to the stage.”

“Moira, you must know that Governor Harcourt will never hear of that. He is a rich man: he will insist upon providing for you as his son’s wife should be provided for; and I’m confident that he will also insist upon your staying here.”

“If I accepted any provision from him he would have the right to insist perhaps,” Moira said quietly. “But I shall not accept anything of the kind. It was not money that I was in search of when I came here

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to win recognition for Royall's sake; and I shall certainly not take, now that Royall has forgotten me, what was denied when it would have averted all this misery."

"I didn't think you still felt resentment for that——"

"I have never felt resentment for it," Moira interposed quickly. "It is not resentment which makes me feel that I cannot accept from Governor Harcourt what Royall is no longer able to give, and is not conscious of any necessity for giving. If I needed it, the case would be different. But God has been good to me: I do not need it. I am well able to support myself, and I prefer to do so. That is all."

That was, indeed, all. The finality of the quiet tones made Mrs. Granger understand that Moira had taken a resolution from which nothing would induce her to recede. And it was not a resolution which had been hastily taken, nor in which wounded feeling of any kind had a share: it was rather an act of the judgment, arrived at after long consideration and not without the help of prayer. Of that the woman who had learned to know her well felt assured. She had not acted hastily: she had put herself and her own feelings aside and given Royall every chance to remember her; and it was only when she saw, with the keenness of a love-sharpened vision, that she was harming instead of helping him, that she determined to remove herself altogether out of his life, and go back to the art she had forsaken for him.

So Mrs. Granger uttered no more futile remonstrances, but watched the letter written and dispatched to Governor Harcourt with something of

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the old sense of drama reviving in her. What would be the result when that letter, with its firmly expressed resolution, was received at Harcourt Manor? What would Royall feel? What would his father think? And—most important of all, as she well knew—what would Elinor Fane do?

It was not long before the last question was answered. On the second day after the letter had been mailed, Miss Fane appeared at Mrs. Granger's door, and asked to see Mrs. Royall Harcourt. The request being brought to Mrs. Granger, she herself conveyed it to Moira.

"If you like, I'll see her for you," she offered. "I will tell her that you are not well——"

"I am well enough to do whatever there is need for doing," Moira said; "and I am sure that there is need to do this. Miss Fane is not likely to come to see me without a reason, and I had better know what that reason is."

Mrs. Granger looked at her doubtfully, hesitated, and finally said:

"It is certain to be something disagreeable, and I thought that I might spare you."

Moira put out a hand and caught hers.

"You are kindness itself," she said; "but you can't spare me—in this. I must hear and answer what she has come to say; for—she is more in Royall's confidence than any one else, you know."

Mrs. Granger opened her lips impetuously—and then closed them again without speech. For an instinct told her that she could give no enlightenment to Moira, and that she had, indeed, no power to spare her anything. Nevertheless, she would have

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given much to have gone down to see Elinor Fane in her place, and to have had so good an opportunity to express the indignation she felt.

Such a course on her part would not in the least have surprised Miss Fane, who was, in fact, somewhat apprehensive of it, and was, therefore, much relieved when the door of the room where she was waiting opened, and Moira entered alone.

As she advanced across the floor, even the girl who rose to meet her—the girl whose cold blue eyes had in them so unmistakable a look of hostility—was struck, if not shocked, by the change in her appearance, by the fragility of the slender figure, and the pallor of the delicate face under the dark masses of silken hair.

"I'm sorry to see that you have been ill," she said involuntarily. "You are looking shockingly."

"Am I?" Moira's tone was indifferent. "Yes, I have been perhaps less well than usual; but I am better now. Will you sit down and tell me why you have come to see me?"

This was certainly direct; and Elinor Fane felt, as she sat down and met the equally direct and steady gaze bent upon her, that the errand on which she had come was more difficult than she had expected it to be. For an instant she looked down irresolutely; and then, drawing herself together, raised her eyes again, with something of defiance in them.

"I was at Harcourt Manor yesterday when your letter was received," she said, "and, therefore, I have come to see you to-day."

Moira lifted her brows slightly.

"You will pardon me if I do not perceive the con-

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nection," she said. "My letter was addressed to those whom it concerned."

A quick flush mounted to Elinor's fair face.

"And you think that it did not concern me?" she asked. "I would have given you credit for more penetration. I thought you would have known that it concerns me as much as it concerns Royall."

No flush came to Moira's face, and it was impossible for her to grow paler; but, nevertheless, there was a change in her expression,—a slight hardening of the finely cut features, as if she were steeling herself to an endurance which was not altogether un-mixed with other feelings.

"Are you quite shameless?" she asked, in a low, vibrating tone. "I have not lacked the penetration for which you give me credit, and I have seen and understood the full meaning of your conduct toward my husband; but I did not think you would venture to speak of it—to me."

"And why not to you?" Defiance was open and unrestrained now, both in look and tone. "You are only an accident in Royall's life—an accident which he is anxious to put away,—while I am the woman he loved before he ever saw you, and whom he loves again now."

"But I," with infinite dignity Moira told her, "am the woman whom he married."

"And what of that?" the other retorted. "It was an act of infatuation which he is unable to explain, which he has forgotten, and desires to repudiate. You must know that, so far from feeling any love for you now, he—doesn't even like you."

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There was an instant's pause before Moira said very quietly:

"Yes, I know it."

"Well, then" (triumphantly), "since you know it, and since you take it so coolly, I'm sure you will be sensible enough to see the obvious way out of the situation,—the way to make everything right for everybody."

"No," Moira replied, with the same quietness, "I do not see that. Nothing can make things right again unless Royall recovers his memory."

"Royall has recovered his memory quite sufficiently to know what he wants, and what he doesn't want," Miss Fane declared positively. "You may take my word for that. And I come to you now, with his full authority, to ask you to release him from a marriage which has become no marriage at all, and allow him to be happy in the way he desires."

"In other words" (Moira had a dim sense of wonder at her own power of self-control), "you are asking me—?"

"I am asking you to take the necessary steps to obtain a divorce from him. It can be very easily obtained, you know. We have talked it over together—yesterday we talked it over with Governor Harcourt also,—and we are all agreed that it is the right thing for you to do. You have everything to gain by doing it. You will secure your own freedom and ample provision for the future, and you have nothing to gain by refusal; for Royall will never acknowledge a marriage which he does not even remember."

"I thought you said a moment ago that he does

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remember it," Moira reminded her. "I was, and am, quite sure that he does *not*,—that if he did, he would come back to me at once. But I am also aware that he may never remember it. We were warned of that, his father and I."

"Then" (impatiently), "doesn't it amount to the same thing? If his mind is a blank as far as that part of his life is concerned, and if he may never remember it, why should he be bound by an act which has no meaning for him now? I tell you again that he wants to be happy,—he wants to marry me."

"And you" (it was impossible to resist the impression that there was a strange compassion in the beautiful eyes bent on her),—"you would be willing to marry a man who is bound by an indissoluble tie to another woman,—not only doing yourself as well as her that great wrong, but taking the terrible risk that memory may awaken at any time, and that he would then hate you and the false tie that bound him to you?"

The voice which had thrilled so many with the poignant music of its tones, thrilled now even the shallow, self-centred nature of the girl, who sat silent, staring at the face so pale, so chiselled, so curiously calm.

"But even if you are willing to do this thing, to take this risk," Moira went on, "it is not possible for me to allow you to do so. Whether he remembers it or not, Royall Harcourt is married to me, and only death can set either of us free."

At those firm, clearly spoken words, the spell which had held Elinor silent broke, and a sudden spasm of anger convulsed her face.

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"You refuse?" she gasped. "You refuse to set him free when you have nothing whatever to gain by holding on to him?"

"You are quite right," Moira told her, with the same extraordinary quietness. "I have nothing whatever to gain; but, nevertheless, I must continue to hold on to him, as you have said, for the simple reason that I have no power to do otherwise."

"No power—when you could obtain a divorce with the greatest ease!"

"You don't understand that what you call a divorce has no power to break the bond of marriage, which is unbreakable except by death."

"I regard that as superstition—and antiquated superstition, too. I can't think that *you* believe it. Nobody believes it now."

"There you are mistaken. Every Catholic knows that no law of man can set aside a law of God."

"But Royall isn't a Catholic. He doesn't believe anything of the kind. And you've no right to hold him bound by the laws of your religion."

"Royall bound himself when of his own free will he married me."

"He has no recollection of ever having done so; but he is sure that, if he did, he was under the influence of a temporary infatuation, and now he wants to be free. He appeals to you, and *I* appeal to you, to give him his freedom. A marriage is no marriage without love, and he has no love for you any longer. You know that: you know that he loves me, and I love him, so why will you not consent to let us be happy together?"

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"Because, as I have told you, I have no power to consent," Moira answered, with a gentleness that seemed to proceed from an immense pity,—pity for the woman who could come to plead in such a cause. "What you ask is absolutely impossible. I am sorry for Royall,—sorry beyond all power of words to express; and sorry, too, for you, although you have brought this disappointment upon yourself and also upon him. But I can do nothing for you."

"You mean that you will not do anything,—you mean that you are determined to make yourself an obstacle to our happiness! But I warn you that we will not endure this. A way will be found,—a way that you'll like less than what has been proposed to you."

"To *suffer* wrong and to *do* wrong are two very different things," Moira told her. "And, in return for your warning, let me give you another. Let me assure you that happiness was never found on the road upon which you have entered; and also that whenever Royall's memory returns, Royall's heart will come back to me. I have not the faintest doubt of this, although I could not act otherwise than I do if I were sure that he had utterly and finally forgotten me."

"You have made your position very clear," Miss Fane declared bitterly. "Royall is to remain here, bound by the tie of a marriage he repudiates; while you go back to Paris, where you will no doubt find plenty of lovers waiting for you. We're aware how you find them everywhere——"

Moira rose to her feet with an air of dignity.

"You will excuse me if I leave you," she said.

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"There is nothing to be gained by prolonging this conversation."

"Nothing at all," the other agreed, as she, too, rose. "I'll carry your decision to Royall. But you need not flatter yourself that he will submit to it."

A faint and very sad smile came to Moira's lips.

"I do not flatter myself at all," she said, "and neither do I deceive myself longer with hope. Whatever Royall may decide to do, the way for me lies too plain and straight to be mistaken, and the rest is with God."

CHAPTER XXVII

IT WAS not a surprise to Moira that the next day brought a telephone message from Paul Lyndon, asking if she would see him. She returned an immediate answer in the affirmative; for, in truth, she was anxious to see him. To her, as to every one else who knew him, there had come a sense of reliance upon his strength of character and clear judgment of mind. She had been keenly conscious of his intense sympathy for her ever since the day in New York when he came to her with the first news of Royall's loss of memory; and she had known, when they were at Harcourt Manor together, that he perceived with a very fierce indignation the tactics of Miss Fane and the blindness of his uncle and his mother. To discuss the situation had seemed to her then impossible, but things were different now: all shield of reticence had been torn away, and she felt that it would be a relief to open her mind and heart freely to the one member of Royall's family who (strangely as it had come about) stood on her side. For even the Governor had fallen away from her,—of *that* his silence assured her even more than Elinor Fane's statement. And so she was glad, in a sad-hearted fashion, to think of seeing Paul Lyndon, and bade him come to her as soon as he liked.

That was sooner even than she had expected. It almost seemed as if he must have flown in answer to her summons, so short was the time between the

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giving of the message and the announcement that he was waiting to see her.

She did not keep him waiting long. In hardly more than a minute she stood before him, with a welcome in her eyes which almost made him forget the change in her appearance which had shocked even Elinor Fane. But that he, too, recognized this change, his first words proved.

"It is good of you to consent to see me," he said; "for I could tell, if I had not heard, that you have been ill."

"Not really ill," she answered, as they sat down, with a curious sense of comradeship of which both were conscious. "But some things are worse than physical illness, and leave deeper marks. I have been through a dark passage, of which I would rather not speak. For after darkness there has come a light,—not a very bright light, but enough for me to see my way quite clearly. I am going home—back to my own country. Have you heard that?"

"It is because I have heard it that I am here," he said, frowning heavily. "I have had a letter from my uncle, asking me to see you. It seems that you have written to him."

"Yes, I wrote to him, telling him what I intended to do, as soon as it was made clear to me what that should be. You see, it was a hard struggle to give up all effort, to go away, to leave the field to one who has played so unworthy a part——"

It were best not to inquire too closely what was the smothered ejaculation with which Lyndon interrupted here; but after an instant he asked, with a calmness which evidently cost effort:

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"And what gave you strength finally to decide as you did?"

The eyes he had learned to know so well were never more lovely than when they looked at him now, filled with a light of utter self-forgetfulness.

"It was the thought of Royall which gave me strength," she said. "It was because I saw that there was nothing else that I could do for him,—that there was no other way in which I could help him. You know, I told you when we talked together last that I felt that my presence was injuring, because it irritated him. This feeling became even stronger afterward; and I knew at last with an absolute certainty that I must remove myself entirely out of his life, in order to give him the serenity and peace of mind which are necessary, if he is ever to be himself again."

"And to gain this end" (there was wonder in Lyndon's tone now) "you are willing to leave him under the influence of Elinor Fane?"

"I cannot save him from her influence by staying," she answered sadly. "That has been fully proved."

Lyndon rose from his seat, walked across the floor, stood at the window for a moment, then turned and came back to her.

"Do you know that he—that she—that they want you to obtain a divorce from him, so that they may marry?" he inquired, almost harshly.

"Yes, I know it," she answered quietly. "There is nothing, I think, that I do not know; for Miss Fane was here yesterday. She came to ask me to do what you have said—to obtain a divorce from Royall—in order that they might 'be happy together.'"

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"And you told her—?"

There was a note of anxiety in the question which made Moira glance at him with surprise.

"Surely you must know what I told her," she replied. "It is something which I have no power to do."

"Why not?"

Again she stared at him.

"Because only death can break the bond of marriage," she then answered, very simply. "I thought you would know that."

"I know that Catholics hold that, generally speaking, the bond is indissoluble," he said; "but are there no exceptions—circumstances under which it may be dissolved?"

She shook her head.

"There are none: no power on earth can dissolve a true marriage."

"But can you call this a true marriage when Royall does not even remember it, when he refuses to recognize it, and when you are forced to go away and leave him?"

"It was a true, that is, a valid, marriage when it was contracted," she replied; "and, therefore, it is a true marriage now, and must remain so as long as we both live. His failure to remember, his refusal to recognize it, cannot alter that fact, because it rests on the unalterable law of God."

There was a moment's silence,—a moment in which, by a flash of memory, Lyndon seemed to see the palm court of a London hotel, and to hear some words which had been flung at him by Mrs. Granger when he talked of Royall's divorcing the woman

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who now sat before him. "Those whom God hath joined together . . ." Was it, indeed, true that those words held a binding force for all ages, and could not be set aside by any law of man? He had rejected the idea then, because it suited him to do so; and, for a different reason, he rejected it now. Whether or not Royall and the girl who had deliberately reawakened his old fancy for her—encouraged to do so by the lax conception of the sacredness of marriage which the world outside the Catholic Church now holds—should 'be happy together,' was to him a matter of supreme indifference; but that Moira, with all her exquisite graces of mind and person, and all the possibilities of her lovely youth, should remain bound to a man who turned from her with distaste, *that* seemed to him altogether intolerable. For it is a result of the individualism which for so long has ruled, and in increasing degree continues to rule, the modern mind, that even a man like Paul Lyndon becomes incapable of looking beyond the individual, and the individual's hardship, to wider results, and perceiving the necessity of an inflexible law for the benefit of human society.

So, with a tightening of the lips and a setting of the jaw which would have told those who were accustomed to meet him on legal battlefields that he was about to make an effort to carry a point on which all the force of his nature was set, he answered Moira's last words:

"There is no question of the validity of the marriage when entered into,—we grant that; but if a marriage ceases to be a marriage in anything but name, it is only right and just that it should be dis-

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solved. When Elinor Fane came to you, she based her request on Royall's desire to be free. Was it not so?"

"But, naturally," Moira assented, "she knew that it was the only plea likely to move me."

"And my uncle in the letter which he has written to me makes the same plea. He has come to believe—we can understand under what influence—that Royall's love for you was only a temporary feeling, and that he has returned in a final sense to his earlier attachment to the girl——"

"Whom his family always wanted him to marry. Yes, I can see how easily Governor Harcourt might be brought to believe that. And so he wishes me to—how is it that you put it?—to set Royall free?"

It was a pathetic question; for she was thinking of the long weeks when Governor Harcourt had leaned upon her strength, and declared that he found his only comfort in it, while they waited for news of Royall. Perhaps Lyndon read her thoughts, for he said gently:

"Try not to blame him. Royall is his only son, and his heart is bound up in him. Here is his letter. Will you read it?"

She shrank a little, growing even paler than she had been before.

"I would rather not," she said. "It could serve no purpose."

"It would at least serve the purpose of showing you in what affectionate regard he holds you, and how anxious he is to provide for your future——"

"On condition that I remove myself out of Royall's life!" she interrupted, with the first bitter tone

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which had come into her voice. "Well, I am about to do that anyway, though not in the manner he desires."

"There is no condition," Lyndon told her quickly. "He is not offering to buy what he asks. He will provide for you in any event; he makes that quite clear."

"There is no need for him to do so. I shall accept nothing."

"I hope you will think differently about that; and meanwhile he begs you to consider Royall's happiness, and to end the present unhappy situation in the only way in which it can be ended."

"And he does not consider that if I were weak enough to yield to his urging, and take the step he desires, it would in all probability open the way to a far more unhappy situation—if Royall's memory returns."

"He has come to believe that, even if Royall's memory returns, his change of feeling will remain. You see, he knows Royall, in some respects, better than you do; and remembers how often he has forgotten one fancy for another——"

"Does he know so little of what marriage means that he can think of Royall's love for me as one of such fancies?" she asked, in a deep, wounded tone.

"He knows what it means to many men—and women—of the present time," Lyndon answered; "and there is little in that knowledge to prevent his reaching such a conclusion. And I" (he paused a moment),—"I am inclined to believe that he is right."

"Right with regard to Royall, do you mean?"

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"Yes, with regard to Royall. Inconstancy has always been the dominant note of his character."

"And, therefore—?" She was gazing at him intently now.

"Therefore" (he met her gaze with one equally direct), "I, too, urge you to do what is asked of you,—to give him his freedom, in order that you may obtain your own. For, while every one else is thinking of Royall, *I* am thinking of *you*. And I beg you to have pity on yourself; to consider your own life,—all that it may hold of happiness if you are free, and all that it would hold of misery if you continue in the position you now occupy, bound to a man who desires only release from you—I am talking brutally, but I am forced to put things plainly before you,—and who will not rest until he has obtained that release, now that the idea has been put into his mind."

"If he does, his act will not be mine, and I shall not be accountable for it. I should be accountable for my own."

"But, in that case, he will wrest from you the freedom you might now give as an act of grace. Is it possible that you don't see the difference?"

"Oh, yes, I see it very plainly!" she assured him. "But what you don't see is that I cannot possibly act otherwise. I cannot seek a divorce, which would give to me, as to him, only a legal, not a real, freedom; for in the sight of God we should remain as firmly married as ever. Nor" (her voice took a stronger note) "if it were in my power, would I do so; for all that has been urged to induce me to consent is false sentiment, based only on the demands of human

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passion. But there is a higher law than that of passion: there is a law which bids us suffer all things rather than do wrong, and which teaches us that through suffering we may learn what we can never learn through the gratification of our desires. And so——”

“And so——?” he echoed, as she paused, while his eyes, with a deep flame in them, were fastened on her face.

“And so,” she went on—and now her voice held a tone of poignant music—“there is still something that I can do for Royall; I can suffer for him. I can offer what I suffer on his behalf, and perhaps win for him the grace to suffer also rather than break the law of God. In that way I can be to him once more his Far-Away Princess, holding before him an ideal of something higher, better, than that which can be gained without effort or pursuit.”

As her voice sank over the last words, silence fell,—silence which lasted while Lyndon, with an abrupt movement, rose and again walked away. Longer than before, he stood at the window; and then, turning, walked slowly back, and halted at her side.

“I want to tell you,” he said, in a tone which thrilled her with its depth and intensity of feeling, “that, whether or not you succeed in doing what you hope to do for Royall, you have done this for me—you have taught me a meaning of love which I never grasped before. You have made me understand that its true essence and strength is in its power of sacrifice; and if there is no such power—if self-gratification is its only law—then it is not love at all, but

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only a base counterfeit. I know now that I was pleading, not only for your happiness, but with a faint hope for myself in the remote future—don't be afraid!" he broke off, as she made a quick movement. "I am not going to speak of that further. I did not intend to speak of it at all; but how can I refrain from telling you what you have done for me? Do you remember how I told you once before—among the lilies, in the garden—that I have always unconsciously sought an ideal—a Far-Away Princess,—which until I met you I never found? Well, I want you to understand that it is worth all the pain it has cost, to have found that ideal realized at last."

"Ah, you think too highly—far too highly of me!" she cried. "You don't know—I have never been able to tell you—how bitterly I reproach myself for the pain I have cost you."

"Never reproach yourself again," he said. "It is a pain I would not be without; for it has lifted my soul into a region that I always dimly felt must exist, but which I could never have entered without your help. And in return for this which you have done for me, I beg you to remember that if ever, in any way, a man's utmost devotion can serve you——"

But with a gesture she stopped him.

"There is no way in which your devotion can serve me," she said gently. "But I thank you for it with all my heart. I can never forget what you have done and what you wish to do for me."

"And will you never allow me to do anything more?" The passionate question seemed to break from him in his own despite. "When you go away,

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is it necessary that I must pass out of your life,—that I cannot even seek and serve you as a friend?"

She looked at him, and in the deep, beautiful eyes he read his answer before she spoke.

"It is necessary," she said, with the same gentleness, but very firmly. "We must not open the way to temptation. If I allowed that it would be a poor return for the devotion of which you have spoken." She rose and held out her hand. "You have called me your Far-Away Princess," she went on; "so you will let me remind you of Melissinde's words to Bertrand:

Every happiness,
Behind it, has an open window so,
Through which there comes a breath that chills the soul.
The window's ever there to claim its own!
Men turn and crouch. They will not go to look,
For they would see stern Duty's galley there.

But you, my friend, are brave enough to look. You know that for you, as for me, stern Duty's galley is ever there, and never to be forgotten."

"I know," he said, in a low tone. "I shall not forget."

Then, stooping, he kissed her hand, and without another word went away.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EVEN in Paris, where sensations of all kind abound, there was more than a little interest displayed when it became known that the beautiful young actress who a short time before had achieved so great a success in "*La Princesse Lointaine*," who had then married some unknown foreigner, and, to the disappointment of the public, especially of its most cultured and appreciative portion, left the stage and retired into private life, had returned and resumed her place upon the boards. Paris shrugged its shoulders, remarked that matrimony and the artistic temperament seldom, if ever, agreed, that such a result was to have been expected, and that Mlle. Deschanel was fortunate in the fact that she had so soon discovered the disillusioning nature of domestic life. There was, indeed, a romantic story afloat of the man she married having gone to Morocco—or Tripoli, was it?—received there some injury to the brain, and lost his memory, so that he retained no recollection of her or of his marriage. But over this Paris smiled a trifle cynically, remarked that such forgetfulness frequently occurred without the intervention of Tripoli; and, well satisfied to have its favorite back, went in gratifying numbers to welcome her on her first appearance.

And this appearance disappointed no one, not even those who rather feared to put a perfect memory to the test of vision. But they found that memory had not exaggerated the charm of the lovely person-

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ality, with its rare grace and distinction; that the dramatic genius, and, above all, the poetic beauty of acting as of person, were as delightful as when the Far-Away Princess had first brought the breath of a fine and high idealization into a world of art which vibrates between noxious realism and vague mysticism. The more discerning also recognized a deeper note in the acting, and said to each other that experience of life had given the actress a more assured grasp upon her art, and a more poignant power to touch the heart with the tones of her golden voice.

And so Moira Deschanel—for it was under this name alone that Paris knew her—came back to the place she had left, and, more fortunate than others have sometimes been, found her public loyal and eager to welcome her. What she suffered in returning, in facing the familiar scenes and people, only God and her own heart knew. But she had nerved herself to endurance, and she plunged into work with a sense of intense gratitude for the distraction it afforded. Outwardly she appeared unchanged; her smile was as sweet, her sympathy as ready as ever. But one of those who knew her best—a man who had been an old friend of her father's—said to a person who commented upon this: "Yes, she seems much the same; she bears herself very gallantly; but when she smiles I look away. I have seen a man smile like that after he has had his death-wound."

But others were less discerning. They saw the gallantry, but not the pain it masked; they caught the note of pathos in her acting, but thought it indicated only a more complete mastery of her art; and so she went on from one success to another, until the

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prophecy went up and down the boulevards that she would one day be known as "the divine Moira."

And then, when spring came again to Paris, when the chestnut trees were beginning to bloom, when the lilacs were filling the air with fragrance, and Moira's heart felt as if it must break with the unbearable recollections which the season recalled, she was asked to appear again as "La Princesse Loiraine." "Your admirers will like to see you in the poetic rôle in which you made your first success," the director of the theatre told her, with a Frenchman's courtesy; "and it will send up receipts for the end of the season," he added, with a Frenchman's business acumen.

Moira shrank within herself from playing that rôle again; but, having no available excuse, consented, and the result surpassed the director's fondest hopes. The public came in throngs to enjoy the charming poetry of the drama, and the exquisite acting of the girl whose loveliness made her the ideal Lady of Dreams—and while the revival of the play was at its height, Paul Lyndon and Royall Harcourt suddenly arrived in Paris.

Moira, whose communication with America was entirely through Mrs. Granger, had had no warning of any such intention on the part of either, and, therefore, knew nothing of their coming. It had been, in fact, determined upon very unexpectedly. Royall had grown intensely restless, moody, and depressed; for as time went on he seemed to become more conscious of the strange lapse in his memory; and after a while it was quite clear that he tired of everything around him, including Miss Fane, her so-

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ciety and attentions. He grew irritable when urged by her to take steps on his own part to obtain a divorce from the wife who had, in the eyes of the law, given him an opportunity to do so by "deserting" him; and at last answered her with sharp finality.

"My mind has not suffered to such an extent," he said, "that I have forgotten that I am a gentleman, not a cad or a scoundrel. And I should have to be both in order to act as you suggest,—to take advantage of a course of conduct which *my* conduct forced on the woman of whom you speak, and to obtain a divorce by means of a false statement."

Elinor flushed angrily.

"It is done every day," she said. "It is understood to be a mere technicality——"

"Euphemisms of that kind fail, in my opinion, to justify dishonorable conduct," Royall remarked, and walked away.

After this a coolness ensued between the two "engaged" persons.

"If he were anxious to marry me he wouldn't hesitate to take steps to set himself free," Elinor told Governor Harcourt, when she announced her intention of going with a party of friends on an extended jaunt across the Continent. "I have done a great deal for Royall; but I won't be made ridiculous, and I won't sacrifice my prospects in life to his scruples. I'm going away to give him a chance to make up his mind as to what he intends to do. If he hasn't decided to get a divorce by the time I return, I shall give him up."

With this ultimatum she departed; and those who

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knew Royall best thought he exhibited relief rather than regret at her departure. He certainly took no steps toward obtaining a divorce. But the artistic impulse awakened in him again, and he suddenly announced his intention of returning to Paris.

"I want to get back to the old studio and to the boulevards," he said. "There's no place like Paris for an artist. I can't remember very much about my life there, but I do recall something, and I think I may recall more if I go there."

No one ventured to object, but Governor Harcourt appealed to Lyndon.

"You must go with him, Paul," he said. "It's a great deal to ask of you, I know; but he won't hear of my accompanying him, and we can't let him go alone."

"There's really no reason why he shouldn't go alone," Lyndon felt bound to say, though his heart had leaped at the thought of going to Paris. "He is perfectly well able to take care of himself."

"I suppose so," his father admitted; "but I should be very anxious, very uneasy, indeed, if he went away—especially if he went to that place—together alone. We don't know how its associations may affect him. You must go with him, Paul, and remain for a time at least. I don't see any help for it; though you've already done so much for him that I dislike to ask more——"

"You know," Paul interrupted, "that I would do anything, either for him or for you. Of course, I'll go—that is, if he'll allow me to do so."

Both men were doubtful on this point. But, to

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their surprise and relief, Royall made no demur at Lyndon's proposal to accompany him. Indeed, he seemed distinctly glad of it. His boyhood affection for his cousin had revived strongly during the time they had been together in Africa and afterward, and he said at once, very cordially:

"Why, I'll be delighted if you can take the time to go over with me."

And so it came about that in the charming spring-time of Paris, when the Far-Away Princess was once more delighting with her wistful grace all those who loved poetic beauty, the two cousins arrived in the fair city by the Seine. And it was while they sat at dinner on the evening of the day of their arrival that Lyndon, calling for a journal, and turning eagerly to the announcement of the theatre where he knew Moira was playing, in order to learn in what part she was appearing, caught his breath when he found that it was in "*La Princesse Lointaine*" that she was to be seen.

This seemed to him too strange to be merely chance, and he hesitated hardly an instant before he glanced across the table at Royall, and said, as carelessly as he could manage to speak:

"I've been looking over the theatrical announcements—for, of course, we'll want to go somewhere to spend the evening—and I see that Rostand's poetical drama, '*La Princesse Lointaine*,' is being played at one of the theatres near here. Wouldn't you like to see it?"

"I don't know," Royall answered indifferently. "I have some association with the name, but I—I can't tell what it is."

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"Perhaps if you went to see the play you might be able to remember what it is."

"Trying to remember fatigues my mind," he said, frowning a little. "I'd prefer to go to see something which is without association, if you don't mind."

"I would really like very much to see this play," Lyndon urged. "It's quite famous, you know, and said to be very beautifully mounted, and—er—played."

"Who is playing in it?—though I suppose I've forgotten all the names of the actors."

"Only one name is mentioned here," Lyndon answered, glancing down at the theatrical announcement. "Mlle. Deschanel appears as the Princess."

"Deschanel!" Royall repeated, frowning again more deeply. "It seems to me that I have heard that name, but I don't remember where or how. Is she a famous actress?"

"Very famous."

"Then we'll go, since you would like to see the play." And a moment later Lyndon heard him murmur to himself, as one who strives to recall a recollection: "Deschanel?"

They were late in reaching the theatre, and the first act was over. But for this Lyndon felt no regret, since he remembered that in the first act the Princess does not appear, and his only desire was to see Moira. The house was well filled; but they were fortunate enough to obtain good seats, in which they had hardly settled themselves before the curtain rose for the second act.

It revealed the beautiful palace hall, "half

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romance, half Oriental," with marble floor of snowy whiteness, and stairway of porphyry strewn with lilies, which the text of the play so minutely describes. Into this symbolic setting entered a group of pilgrims, with shells, staffs and palms, to await the coming of the Princess, and, like a Greek chorus, tell of the arrival of the strange young knight, just landed from a foreign galley. As they talked, Lyndon was conscious of the hard beating of his heart; for he knew that in a moment Moira would appear, and what would Royall think, feel, or do? He began to regret that he had given him no warning, said no word of what he might expect. But, in truth, he had been afraid to do so,—afraid lest, in that case, he might refuse to go. And Lyndon was passionately desirous that this experiment should be made,—that Royall should see Moira in the character and amid the scenes in which she had first won his heart; and, so seeing, perhaps remember her.

There was a further minute or two of waiting; then a herald announced "The Princess!" The golden door at the head of the porphyry stairs opened, and there she stood—a vision of marvellous grace and beauty, in her jewelled cope, a braid of pearls across her lovely forehead, and surrounded by children bearing tall stems of lilies. It was a picture which no one who saw it could ever possibly forget; and Lyndon, gazing in passionate admiration—thinking, too, of the tall lilies in the distant garden of Harcourt Manor,—was suddenly startled by a sound, the deep intaking of breath, beside him.

He turned quickly. Royall was leaning forward in his seat, staring intently at the beautiful vision, for—

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getful of his surroundings, and evidently absorbed in the effort to grasp a memory which eluded him. It was clear that the striking picture, the dreamlike loveliness of the figure for which all else was but a setting, had roused the dormant recollection of the mind, and that a painful struggle to remember wholly was going on. What would be the result? Would he succeed in capturing the memory which evaded him, or would this experiment only prove afresh his inability to do so? Lyndon, fearing to speak, fearing to ask a question, almost held his own breath as he watched the rigid attitude, the intent face, the dark eyes, narrowed under the frowning brows, which never left the exquisite form that came slowly down the porphyry stairs, among the fair, symbolic lilies.

But when the applause which greeted her had subsided, and in the stillness which settled over the house, the wonderful, violin-like tones of her voice were heard, addressing the pilgrims:

"So you'll see France again, O happy folk!"

Lyndon forgot the intent figure beside him, forgot the sad problem of Royall's loss of memory,—forgot everything to steep his soul in the music of that voice, whose enthralling cadences he had first heard, while gazing out over the sea, from the deck of the *Mauretania*.

* * * * *

It was only when the curtain finally fell over the last pathetic scene, when they had heard Melissinde's thrilling tones in her last speech—

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"Farewell! No tears—I go to holy peace!
I've learnt at last what bliss essential is!"

and Father Trophime's solemn line,

"Undying love is work for Heaven done!"

that Lyndon roused from the trance of fascination which had held him, and, turning to his cousin, laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Royall," he said, in a tone of deep solicitude, "do you remember now?"

But in the sombre eyes which looked up at him he read only pain and doubt.

"Remember!" Royall echoed, like one in a dream. "No, I can't remember—though I have felt throughout as if I were on the point of doing so. It's as if a door were slightly opened, and then closed again,—closed hopelessly." He rose abruptly. "Come, let us go," he said. "I am tired."

Lyndon knew he meant that his mind was tired, intensely tired, of the strain to which it had been subjected, and of the struggle to remember, which had taxed it so hardly; and, blaming himself for having in a manner forced the effort, he followed his cousin out of the theatre.

But Royall's haste—which seemed dictated by a desire to escape from what was painful—exceeded his own, and in the throng pouring out of the theatre they became separated. . . . Lyndon never quite knew what happened then; for, making his own leisurely way out, quite sure of finding Royall waiting for him on the pavement, he was suddenly aware of an uproar beyond—of cries, exclamations, of that electric sense of an accident which passes through a

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crowd. And, with a quick foreboding of ill, he hurried forward—to find Royall lying senseless, as he had been dragged from under the motor which had knocked him down.

“The chauffeur was not to blame,” those who witnessed the accident eagerly informed Lyndon. “The gentleman seemed as if he were walking in his sleep, and he stepped immediately in front of the car.”

When Lyndon’s card was brought to Moira in her dressing-room, followed closely by himself, she had not yet taken off the robe of clinging white, sown with seed-pearls, which she had worn in the last act; and, as she turned toward him in amazement, she seemed for a moment more like the Princess of the play he had just witnessed than herself. But it was Moira who came quickly toward him,—Moira who cried out at sight of his pale face:

“*Paul!* What has happened? What has brought you here?”

He took her outstretched hand in both his own, as he answered, with a calmness which was the result of strong will acting on emotion at its utmost tension:

“Royall has had a severe accident. He was knocked down by a motor car in attempting to cross the street. Will you come to him?”

“Come to him!” she gasped. “Is he here—in Paris?”

“He is here, in this theatre. We were just leaving it, after seeing you play, and he went ahead of me. He was not quite himself——”

“Did he remember —did he know me?”

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Lyndon made a gesture of despair.

"There were gleams of memory, but he could not grasp them. It was the effort to do so that no doubt engrossed, confused his mind. Don't talk of it now, but come! When I told them who he was, and—and that you would wish to know at once, they allowed him to be brought and laid in the foyer, while I came for you. So come!"

She asked no further questions: one look at his face was enough to tell her that hope had no place there; so, mutely, she hurried with him through the now empty and darkened theatre to the foyer, where Royall had been laid on one of the silken couches, when the theatre people learned that he was the husband of the beautiful star, whose pathetic story was well known to them.

Those who were there—the director, a doctor, and one or two others—drew back instinctively as she entered. Her maid had thrown around her shoulders the first wrap at hand, which chanced to be the jewelled cope she had worn in the play. And so it was a bewildering vision of the Princess Far-Away—of her who so short a time before had knelt by the dying prince that had come from afar to seek her—who now cast herself on her knees beside the prostrate figure of the man who had so madly loved, so tragically forgotten her.

"Royall!" she cried, in tones which those who heard never forgot. And again, close to his ear, in a murmur of softest music: "Royall, my love, my heart! Royall! Will you not give one look, one word, to your own Moira?"

There was a breathless pause. The doctor, who

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was watching closely, looked up at Lyndon and shook his head. But even as he did so there came a low cry of joy from Moira, for her voice had touched at last the chord of recollection; and Royall's eyes, unclosing, met her own with a light in them which she had never seen since they parted for the woeful journey which had carried him so far away from her.

"Moira!" he said, in the old tone of passionate adoration. "Moira, my heart's delight, have you come back to me? You've been away a long time—or was it I who was lost?"

"It was you who were lost for a little while, my Royall!" she told him, in a voice of tenderest sweetness. "But you have come back! Oh, I knew that God was good, and that you would come back to me!"

"How could I fail to come back to you, my Princess!" he murmured. "I remember it all now. I was fighting with the Arabs. But in the confusion one of them attacked me. I saw the heavy Crusader's sword—they still have swords which were captured in the Crusades—coming down on my head, and—and then I lost you! I've never found you since—until to-night. But I knew my Princess Lointaine when I saw her again—though not as I know you now—Moira——"

The failing tones trailed off into silence over the beloved name; but the eyes still gazed at her, filled with the light of adoration.

"Royall," she cried, shaking with sudden fear, "you will not go away from me again, now that you have come back! You will stay with me!"

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He smiled at her a little, his mind evidently filled with memory of the play he had lately seen.

"Joffroy could not stay," he whispered. "But he was right. I always liked his words:

How many sink exhausted, by the road,
And never see their Princess Far-Away!

But I have seen and loved, and now—now I have come back to her to die——"

"No, no!" she cried, in wild entreaty. "Royall, you are not going to die!"

She looked up at the doctor, with a passionate demand in her eyes, which he answered by a compassionate whisper in her ear:

"There is no hope: he is fatally injured. Be brave, and do not make it harder for him than you can help."

Do not make it harder for him! That was the appeal which brought her to a realization of what was demanded of her,—which made her put away all thought of self, and think only of helping Royall along the dark road which all flesh must follow. Gathering her courage, she whispered:

"Dear heart, when we were together, you often joined me in some little prayers. You said you liked them. You said my faith seemed to bring God very near. He is near, very near, now; so you will say the prayers again, with a great confidence in His love and mercy. Say them with me, dear love!"

In a tone which did not falter, she repeated slowly and softly, first a short act of contrition, and then, very briefly, acts of faith, hope, and charity, while his failing voice followed her like a child's. By the

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time she had finished it was clear to all that the end was not far off. But once more the lids lifted, and his eyes looked at her with the old gaze of adoring love; then the lips moved, and, bending close, she heard again the murmur of her name, before the great silence fell.

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